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LANDSCAPE FEASIBILITY STUDY

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LAND EAST OF BATTLE, ROTHER
EAST SUSSEX, TN33 0LP

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document has been produced on behalf of Medicy Oast Bodiam Ltd.
- 1.2 Lloyd Bore were instructed in August 2023 to undertake a Landscape Feasibility Study for the site to determine the 'Opportunities and Constraints' relevant to potential development of the site for the purposed of residential provision.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to undertake an impartial baseline assessment of the site to identify the relevant landscape and visual amenity components of the site and its surroundings, identify the relevant planning policies and statutory designations applicable to the site and its surroundings and determine the nature of the potential opportunities and constraints in relation to potential development of the site for residential development

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

- 1.4 This report has been compiled by Andrew Cox on behalf of Lloyd Bore Ltd.
- 1.5 Andrew is a Landscape Architect and Head of Landscape Architecture at Lloyd Bore Ltd (established 1996), which is a specialist practice offering consultancy services in Landscape Architecture, Ecology and Arboriculture, based in Canterbury, Kent.
- 1.6 Andrew has many years post qualification experience in landscape architecture and landscape assessment work, including extensive involvement in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment projects

2. SCOPE OF ASSESSMENT

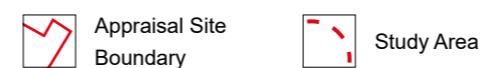
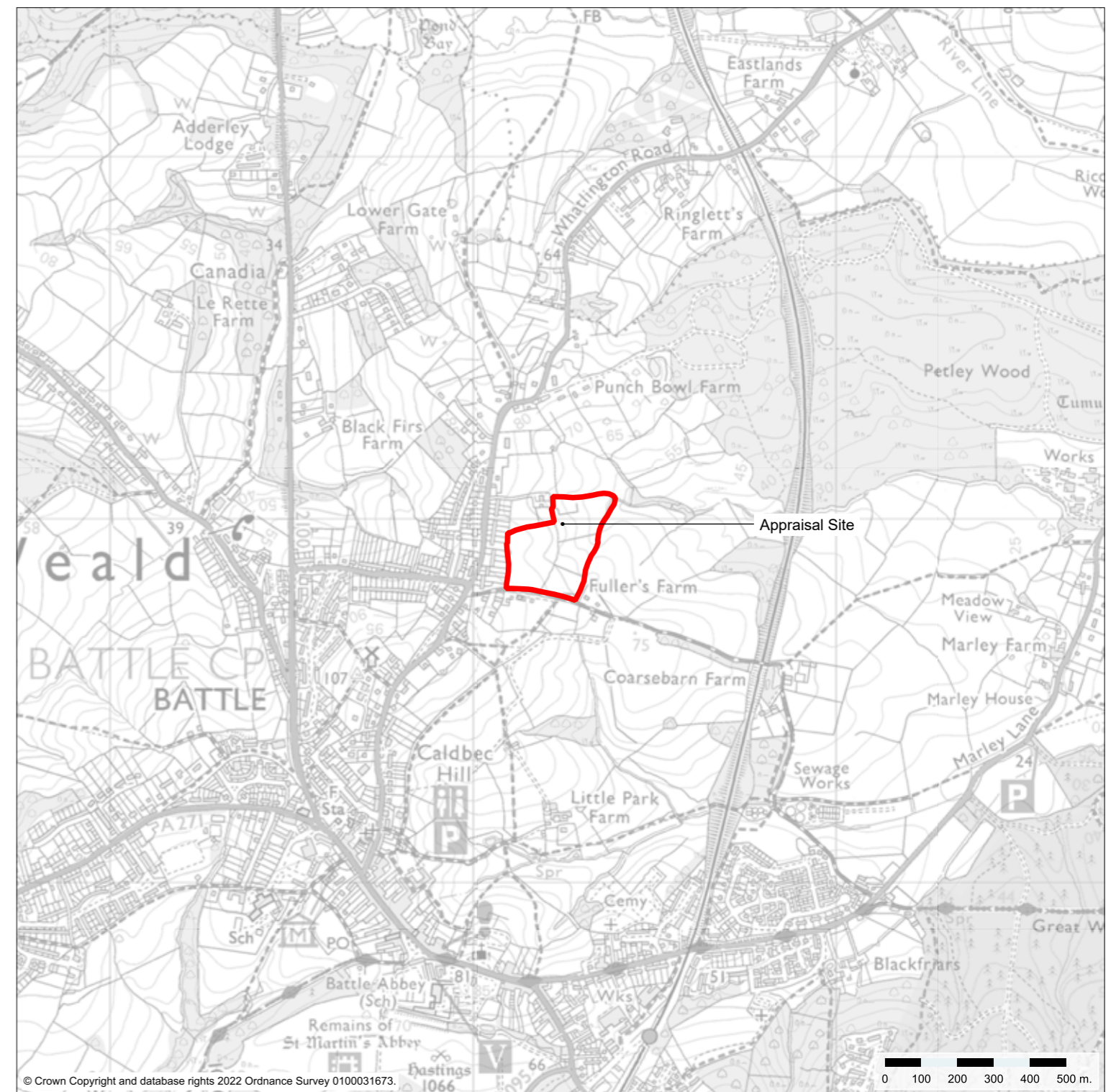
ESTABLISHING THE STUDY AREA

- 2.1 Having considered the site local contextual setting a study area with a radius of 1.5 km. centred on the proposal site has been determined as sufficient for this assessment.
- 2.2 The defined study area for this assessment is shown in the opposite figure.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- 2.3 Where applicable the following sources of information have been consulted for the purposes of this assessment:
 - OS digital mapping data.
 - MAGIC online mapping data.
 - Historic England Listed Building and Scheduled Monument Listings.
 - Historic England Register of Parks and Gardens.
 - Core Strategy Documents / Policies.
 - Council Local Plans / Proposal Maps / Policies.
 - Supplementary Planning Documents.
 - Capacity Studies.
 - Management Plans.
 - Landscape Character Assessments.
 - Conservation Area Appraisals.
 - Parish Plans, Design Guides.

Fig. 1: Ordnance Survey map indicating site location, surrounding features, and established study area.



3. DESKTOP BASELINE STUDIES

BATTLE

2.4 The following text has been extracted from the Battle Civil Parish Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2028

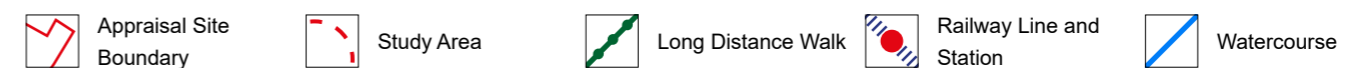
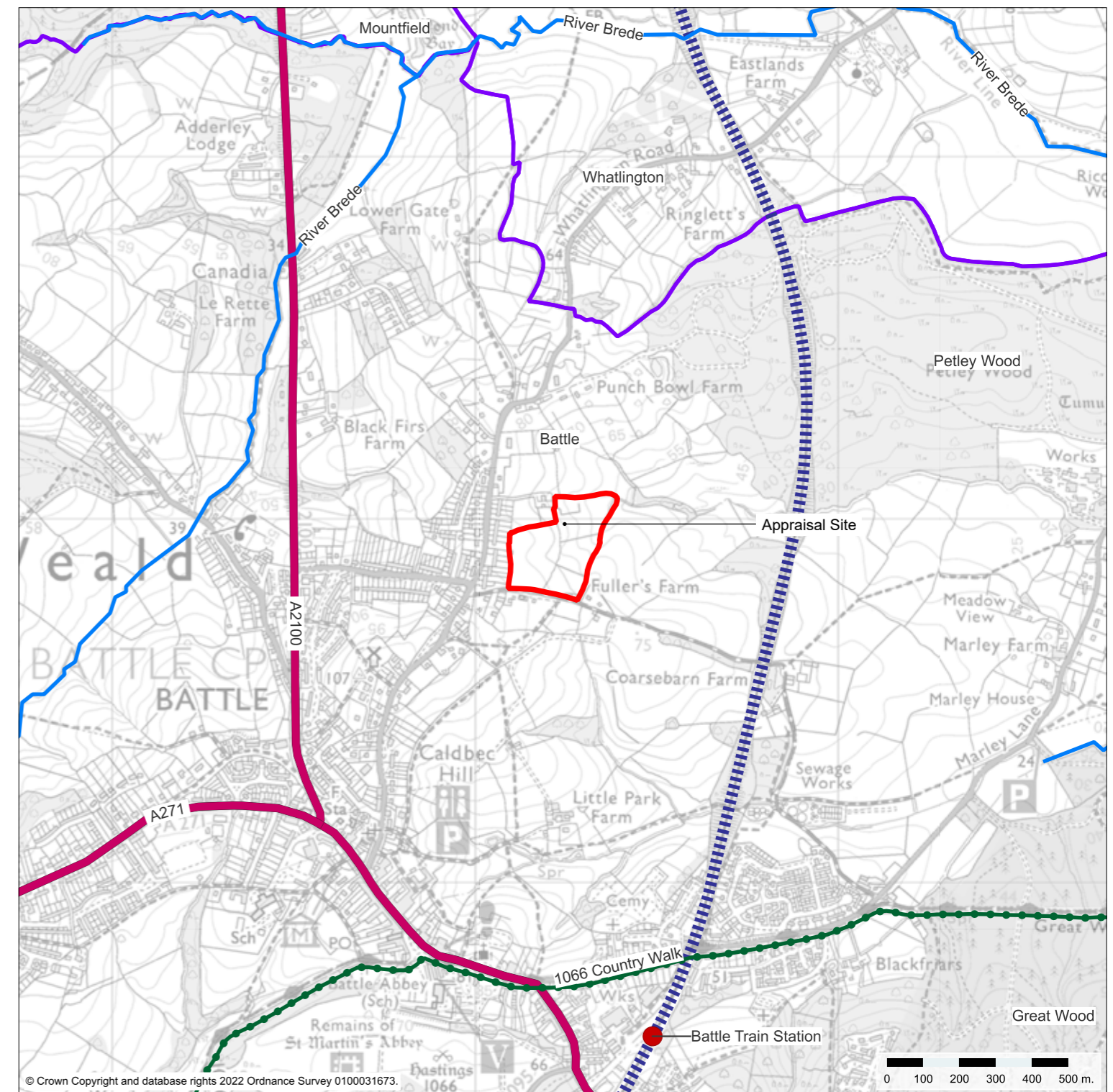
'The town of Battle marks the world renowned site of the Battle of Hastings in 1066, which gave the town its name. The town began with the erection of the Abbey by the Norman victors as a penance for the dead of the battle and afterwards, and to mark where, King Harold was killed. The town grew up in the late eleventh century to provide the trades required for the building work: there were over a hundred houses by 1105 and their sites can still be traced. Henry I encouraged the town with grants of licences for fairs and markets, the last cattle market survived until the 1960s to be replaced by a new library and housing close to the (now) TenSixtySix roundabout. Building of St Mary's Church began in the early twelfth century for the needs of the local population, a function it still serves. Development of the town, north and south, was along one of the principal High Weald ridges.'

The Parish of Battle comprises three distinct parts within the Parish boundary, namely the hamlet of Telham, Battle Town and Netherfield. The village of Netherfield is separated from Battle Town by agricultural land, some forestry and open spaces; whereas the hamlet of Telham is connected to Battle by ribbon development on the south side. Whilst nearly all areas within the boundary have some historic significance, Battle itself is of national and international importance, with the "Senlac" battle ground, which is protected by English Heritage, the Abbey and its market town profile established over many centuries. It also acts as a service centre for a large rural hinterland which stretches far outside its Parish boundary. The entire Parish also falls within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and retaining the 1970 designated conservation area status is of paramount importance.

Within Battle Civil Parish there are two designated (electoral) wards for Rother DC; North Battle including Netherfield & Whatlington (Whatlington is outside the Civil Parish) and South Battle including the hamlet of Telham.

2.5 The site is located adjacent to the north eastern tip of the current settlement extents, approximately km north of the town centre and Battle Abbey, on the northward side of Caldbeck Hill, just north of Uckham Lane and east of Whatlington Road

Fig. 2: Ordnance survey map indicating study area extent and surrounding features.



THE SITE

- 7.2 The proposed site is roughly rectangular in shape measuring approximately 5.63 ha in area and ranges in height from 85m AOD down to 51m AOD
- 7.3 The northern boundary is approximately 117 m in length and adjoins agricultural paddocks along its western half and a narrow strip of woodland along the eastern half.
- 7.4 The eastern boundary is approximately 306 m in length and comprising a substantial field hedge / woodland strip. At its northern end it adjoins onto a small area of woodland that in turn joins to and forms part of a small linear area of Ancient Woodland to the north east. The central proportion of the boundary adjoins a farm track and arable farmland with the Fuller Farm complex adjoining the boundary at its southern end.
- 7.5 The southern boundary is approximately 263 m in length and adjoins Uckham Lane which provides the only direct access to the site.
- 7.6 The western boundary is approximately 360 m, adjoining to the rear of 17 detached properties located along the eastern side of Whatlington Road.
- 7.7 The site comprises of predominantly agricultural paddocks, with associated agricultural structures fencing and field boundary hedgerows / vegetation. The south east corner of the site comprises of a single detached residential properties with associated domestic curtilage.

Fig. 3: Ordnance survey map indicating study area extent and surrounding features.

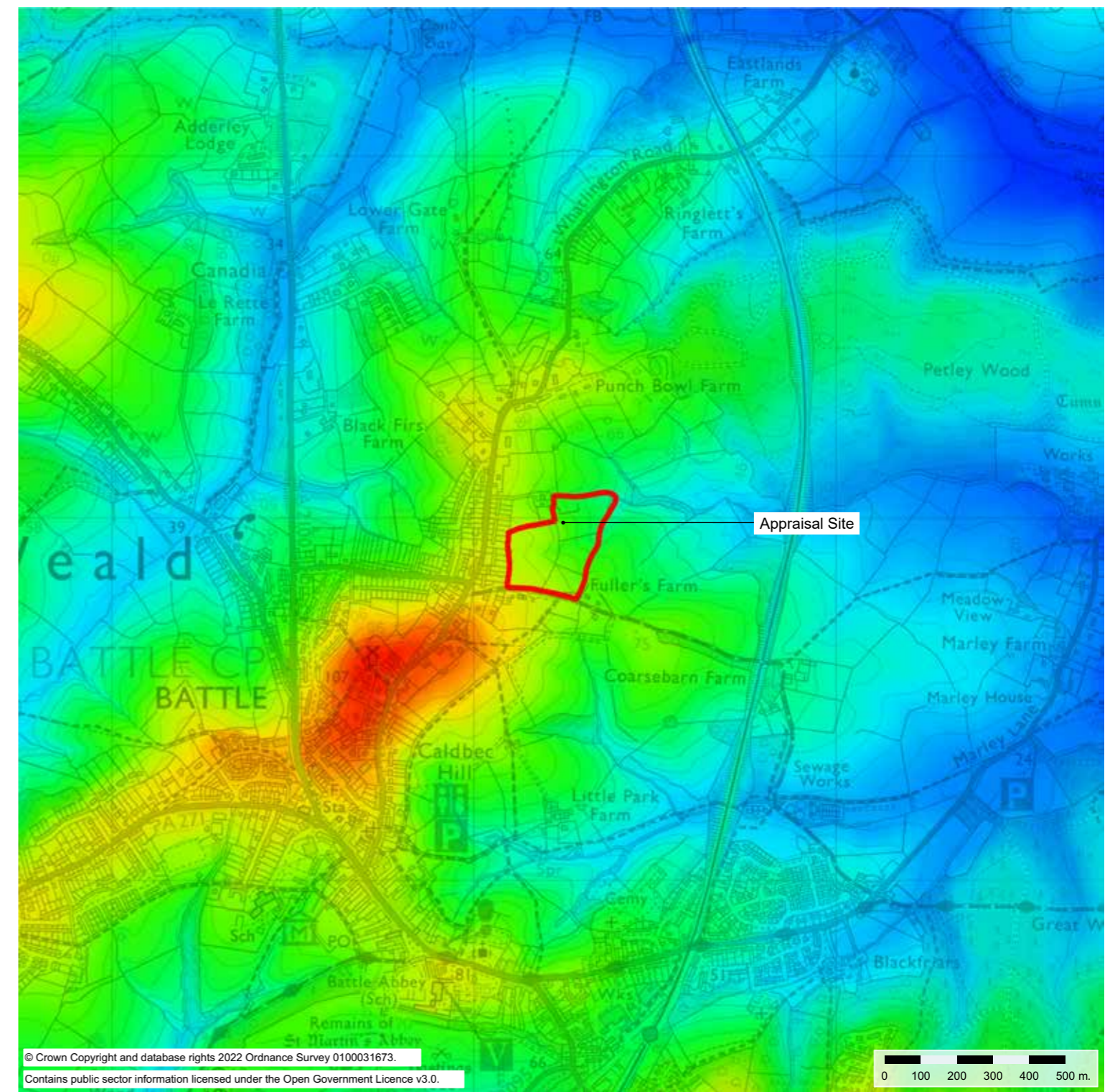




SITE TOPOGRAPHY

- 7.8 The diagram opposite shows a indication of the general topographic pattern of landscape associated with the settlement of Battle, its immediate surroundings and the proposed site.
- 7.9 The settlement of Battle including the Abbey site is largely associated with an elevated hill / ridgeway known as Caldbec (Seniac) Hill which reaches elevations up to 107m AOD. Caldbec Hill is located on the southern side of a broad wide valley associated with the River Line which runs generally from west to east.
- 7.10 The site itself is located on the north east side of the hill with a topographic range of approximately 34m, from circa 85m AOD down to 51m AOD falling generally in a south west to north east direction.
- 7.11 Caldbec Hill and the River Line Valley with its many side tributaries are the 2 most prominent topographical features of the area.



Fig. 4: Ordnance survey map indicating wider topographical features.

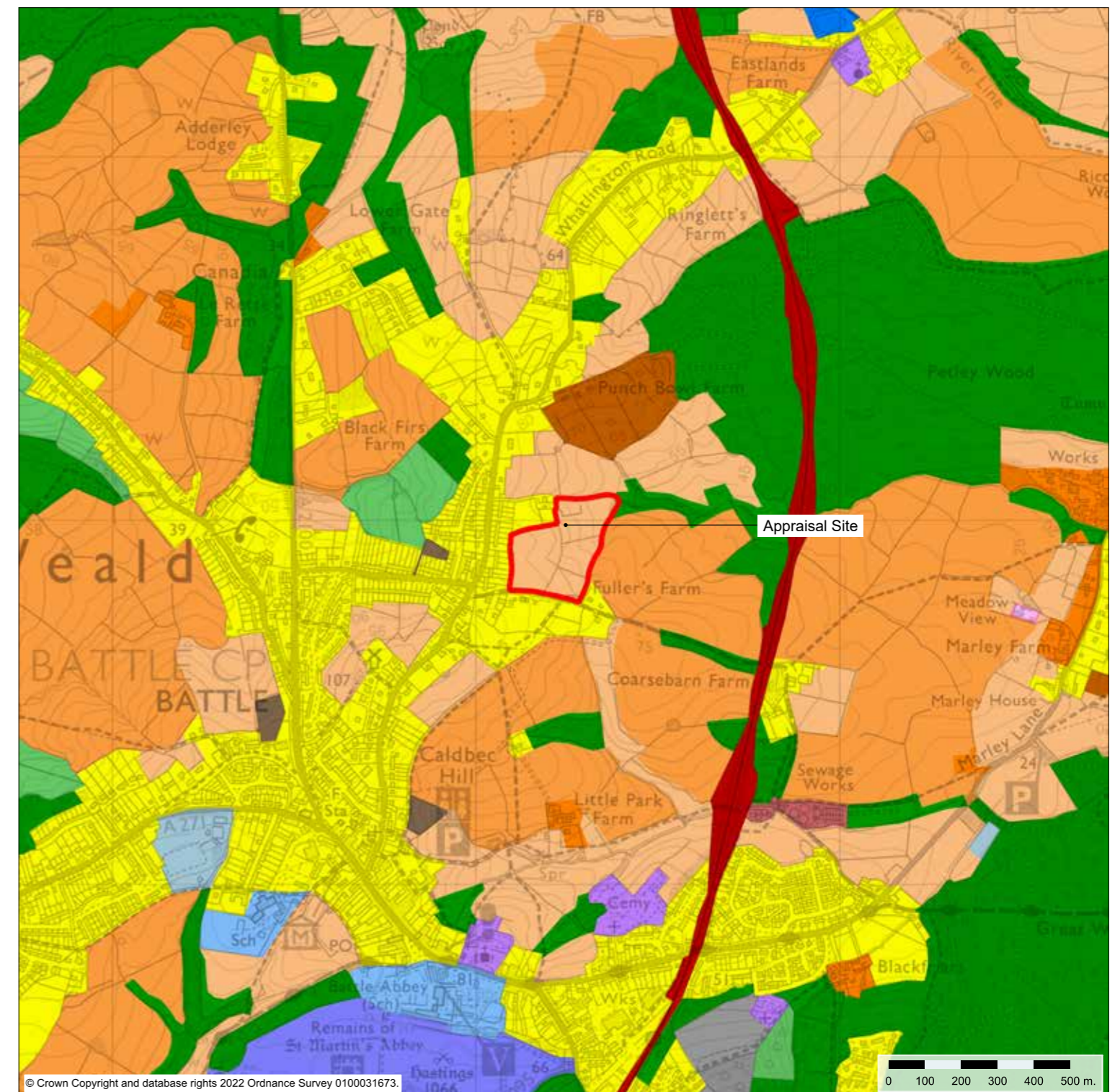


 Appraisal Site Boundary
  Study Area

LAND USE / LAND COVER

- 7.12 The diagram opposite shows an indication of the general pattern of land use associated with the settlement of Battle, its immediate surroundings and the proposed site.
- 7.13 The majority of the study area shown can be comprised of 3 primary land use types
 - Settlement
 - Agricultural with an even mix of arable and grazing farmland
 - Woodland
- 7.14 The area also includes the following significant other land uses
 - Historic /Religious (Battle Abbey)
 - Rail Infrastructure (Hastings Line)
- 7.15 The site comprises wholly of existing agricultural grazing paddocks that are consistent with 1 of the 3 main land use typologies for the wider landscape. It is surrounded on the west and south by areas associated with settlement and by areas of agricultural grazing and arable farmland to the north and east.

Fig. 5: Ordnance survey map indicating locations and extents of surrounding Land Use.



Appraisal Site Boundary	Study Area	Agriculture - farm complex	Agriculture - arable field	Agriculture - paddock	Orchard
Education	Recreation	Allotment	Religious	Residential	Historic
Construction	Rail	Infrastructure	Woodland	Parkland	Water body

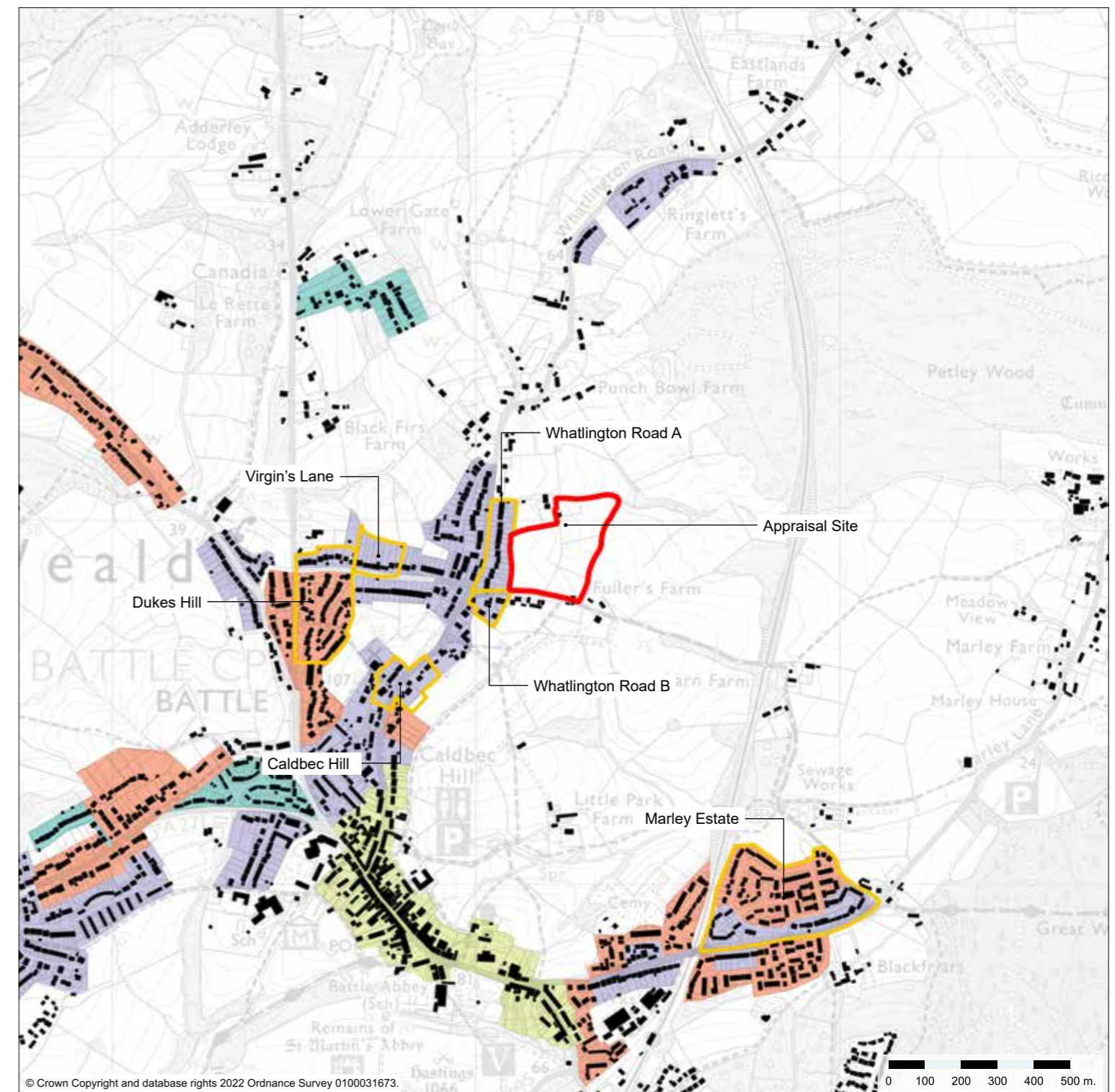
DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS & URBAN GRAIN

- 7.16 The diagram opposite has been produced by study of historic mapping data and shows the development pattern and trends of the settlement of Battle. This shows that the town originated as quite a small and tightly formed settlement immediately to the north and associated directly with Battle Abbey.
- 7.17 The settlement seems to have experienced little in the way of major expansion pre 1930's but there appears to be a significant, rapid and sizeable phase of growth between 1930 and 1970 largely as linear / ribbon development along main road ways to the north of the original settlement extending west along the A271, northwest along Netherfield Road and north east along Caldbec Hill and Whatlington Road.
- 7.18 Similarly there then appears to have been a another distinct phase of more modern post 1970 development in the form of largely infill development both the north, west and east of the site
- 7.19 By analysis of the urban grain of different parts of the settlement outside of the historic core the following table has identified the characteristics of development density within the settlement.

Sample Name	No. Dwellings in Sample	Approximate Sample Area ha.	Units per ha.
Virgins Lane	10	1.27	8
Marley Estate	270	9.05	30
Caldbec Hill	10	1.75	6
Whatlington Road A	6	0.71	8
Whatlington Road B	17	1.84	9
Dukes Hill	62	4.48	14

- 7.21 Typically pre 1930s development appears to be a fairly consistent and low development density of 8-9 units per hectare with a high proportion of detached properties set within large plots.
- 7.22 Post 1930's development however appears to be more varied with larger modern developments having a density of between 14 to 30 units per hectare.
- 7.23 The site is currently outside of the defined settlement extents and is devoid of development with the exception of a single dwelling in the south east corner of the site. Originally the site would have been clearly separated from the historic town centre core and has ultimately become associated with the settlement fringe by virtue of the post 1930 northward expansion of the settlement along Caldbec Hill and Whatlington Road.
- 7.24 The site now occupies a location in relation to the settlement that is considered to be consistent with similar locations that have experienced post 1970 development. Development on the site would therefore be consistent with the historic trends of settlement expansion and distribution.

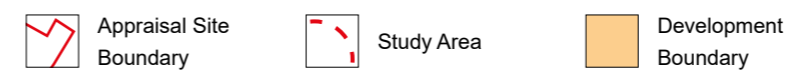
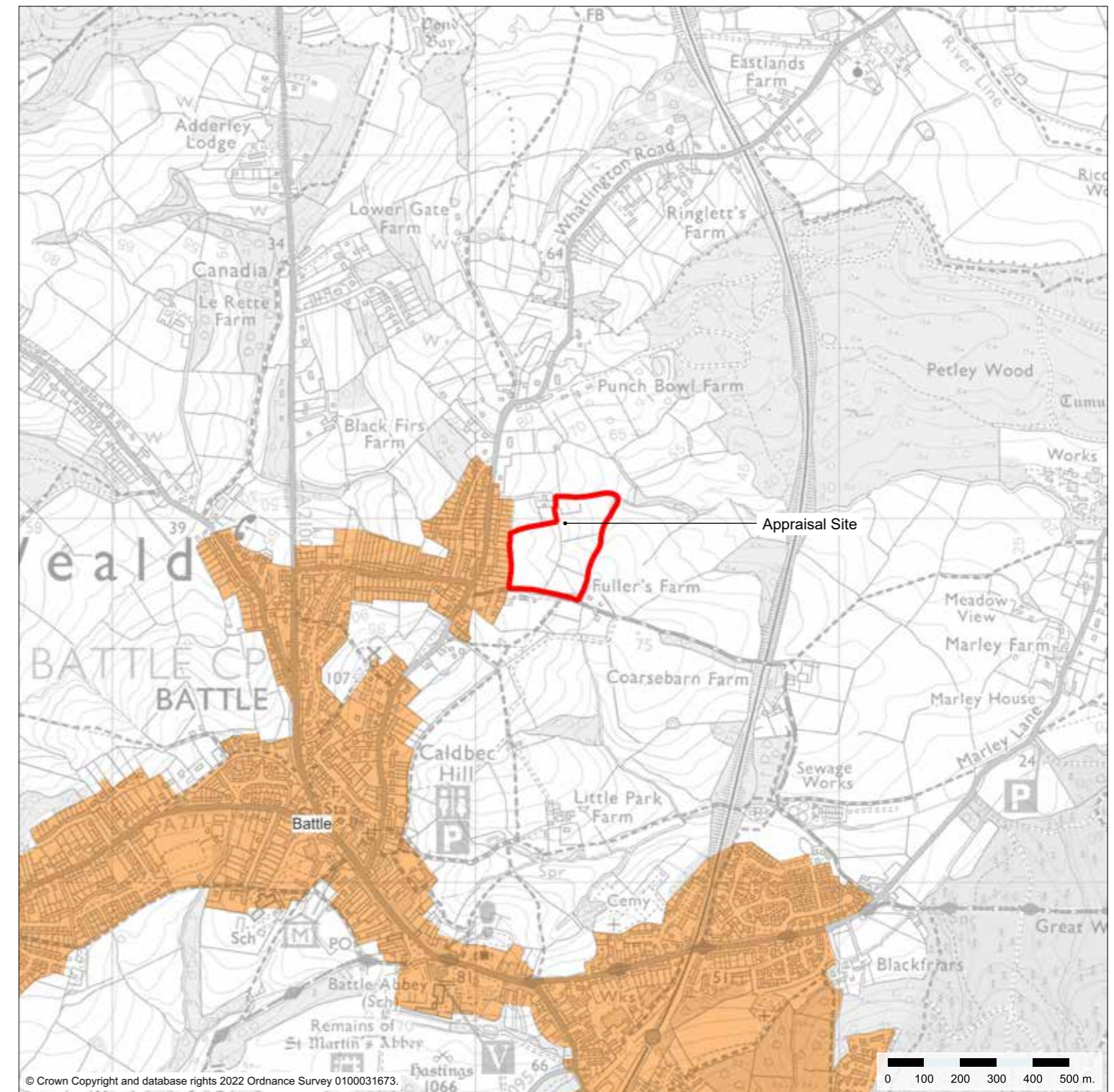
Fig. 6: Ordnance survey map indicating density and distribution of surrounding Grain of Development.



SETTLEMENT BOUNDARY

- 7.25 The site is located outside and immediately adjoining the defined settlement extents.
- 7.26 Development on the site would therefore clearly result in a change to the settlement boundary. This will result in a change in the physical and visual relationship between the settlement and its surrounding open countryside and the High Weald AONB.

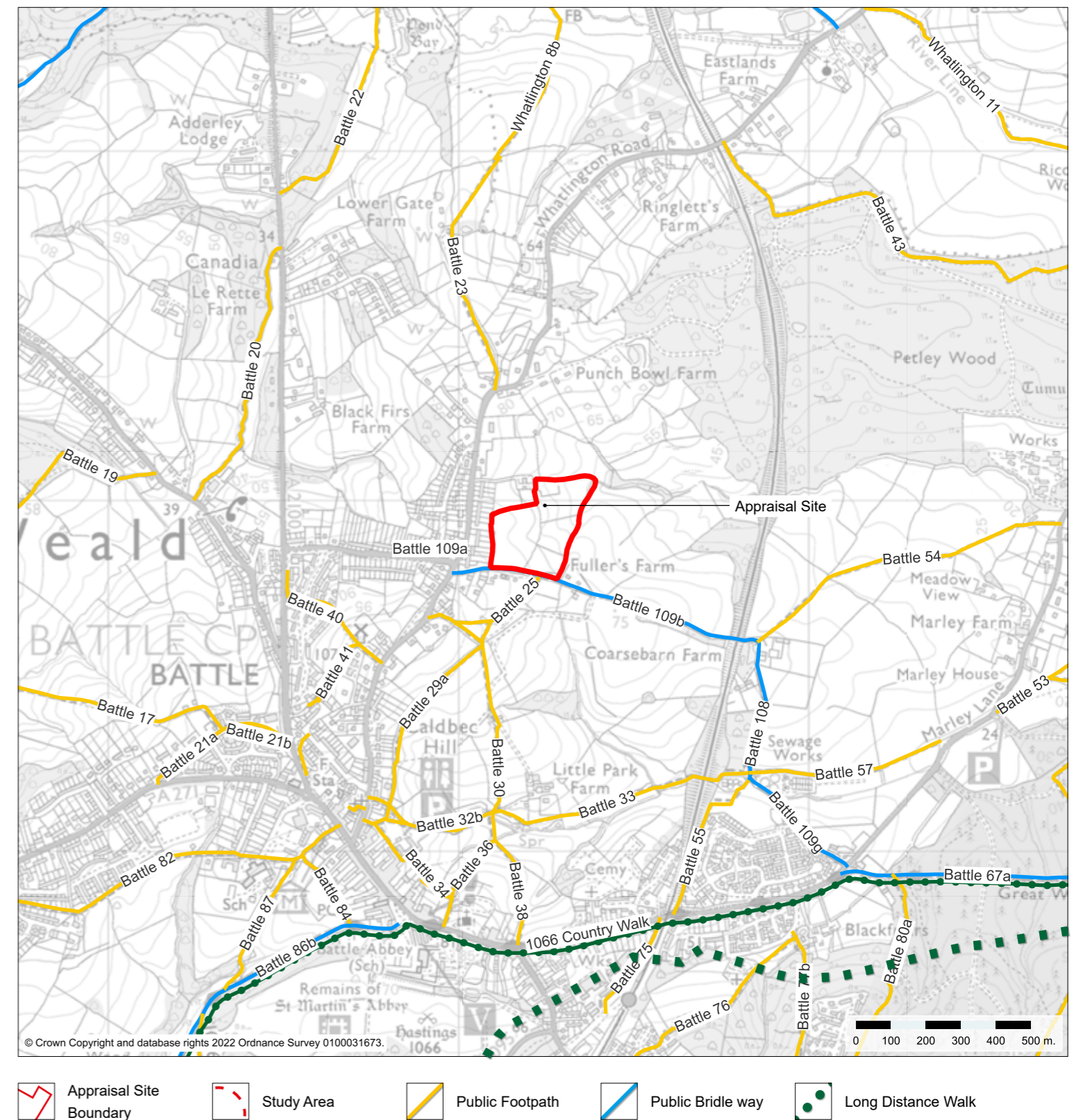
Fig. 7: Ordnance survey map indicating extent of Development Boundary.



PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

- 7.27 There are no public rights of way present on or crossing the site.
- 7.28 The southern boundary of the site immediately adjoins Uckham Lane which is a designated Public Bridle way. This is also identified as a key secondary route within the Battle Neighbourhood Local Plan.
- 7.29 Proposed development on the site will not result in any direct impacts upon existing public rights of way but depending upon detailed proposals it could have an effect on the immediate setting of Uckham and bridle way 109b
- 7.30 Via Uckham Lane the site is well connected to the wider settlement and the town centre both via public roads as well as a network of public footpaths which extend over and down Caldbec Hill. It is noted however that there is no connectivity to the immediate north, east or west of the site and that generally the areas to the north of the settlement as a whole as little in the way of public right so way.

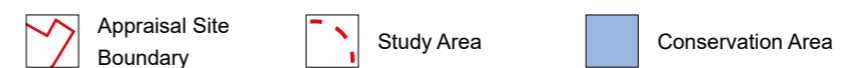
Fig. 8: Ordnance survey map indicating locations of surrounding Public Rights of Way.



CONSERVATION AREAS

- 7.31 The site is not covered by or immediately adjacent to a Conservation Area.
- 7.32 The closest conservation area is Battle located 660m south of the site boundary. This conservation area is largely associated with Battle Abbey and the historic town centre core extending north along Mount Street up to The Old Court House Building.
- 7.33 The site is separated from the conservation area by significant development associated with the northern part of the settlement located along Caldbec Hill and Whatlington Roads and by the landform of Caldbec Hill itself. As a result any development on the site would have no direct impact upon the conservation area or its immediate setting.

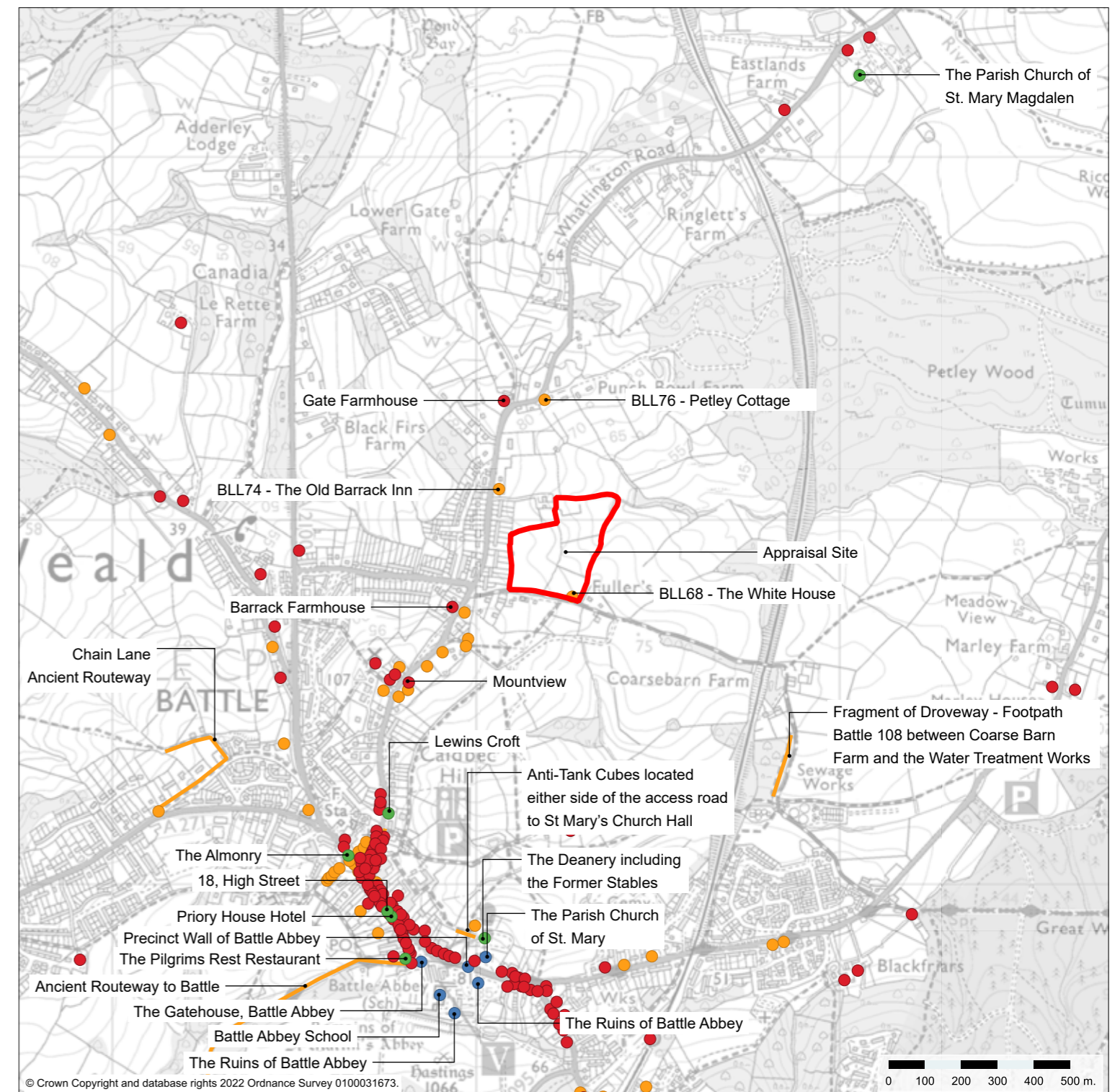
Fig. 9: Ordnance survey map indicating location and extent of surrounding Conservation Areas.



LISTED BUILDINGS

- 7.34 The site does not contain or immediately adjoin at nationally recognised listed buildings.
- 7.35 The closet listed building is the Grade 2 Barrack Farm House, located 163 m south south west of the site boundary in the western side of Whatlington Road and separated from the site by intervening residential development which extends along the eastern side of Whatlington Road
- 7.36 Due to this separation development on the site will have not direct impact upon the Listed Building nor its settings.
- 7.37 The site does contain however a single locally recognised historic asset in the form of The White House a single 2 storey detached cottage located in the south east corner of the site adjoining Fullers Farm.
- 7.38 Although any development proposal are unlikely to involve any direct impact to the building or its immediate surroundings it is likely that development could result in a change in the appearance and nature of the local setting of the building.

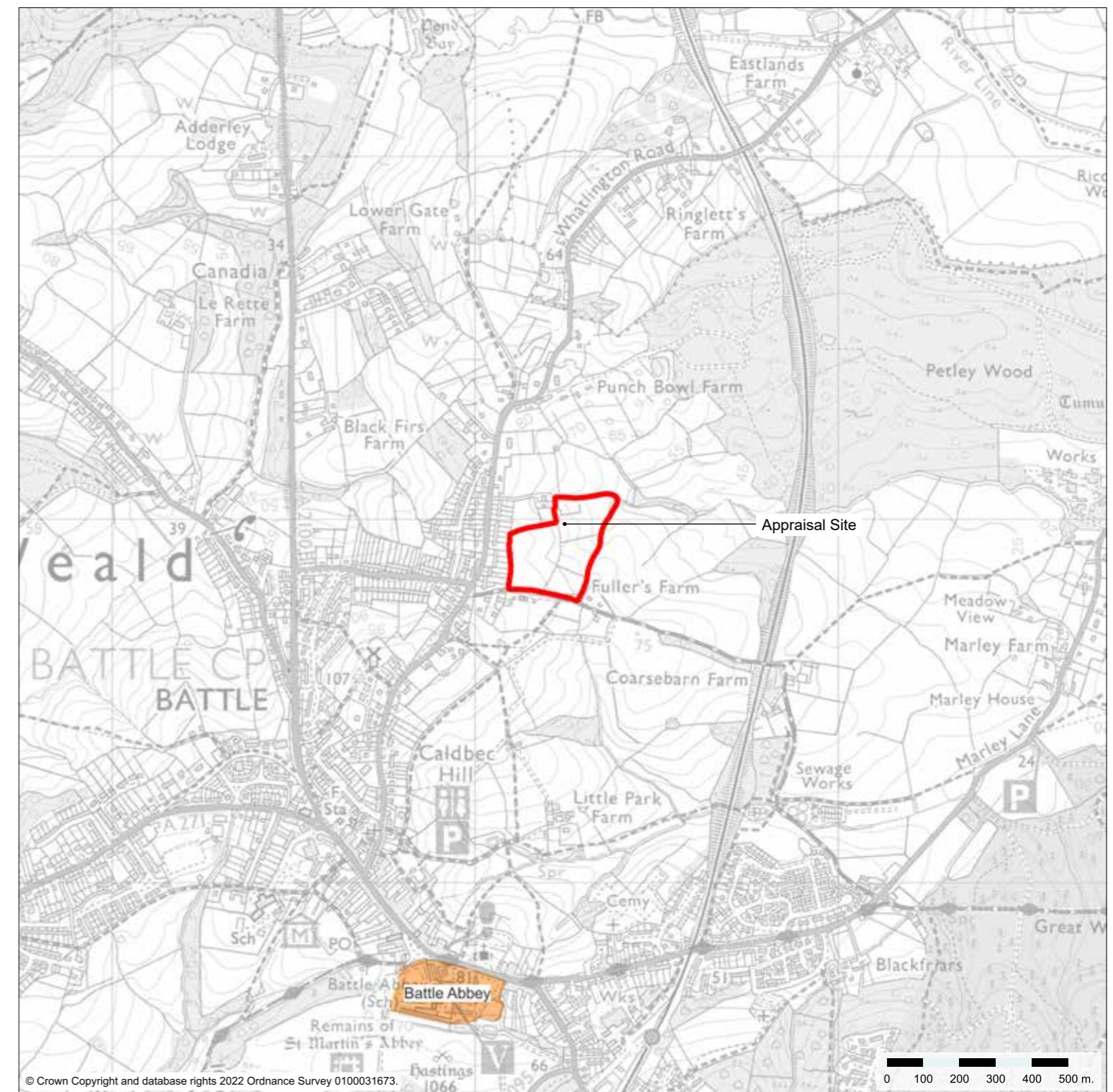
Fig. 10: Ordnance survey map indicating location of surrounding Listed Buildings.



SCHEDULED MONUMENTS

- 7.39 The site is not covered by or immediately adjacent to a scheduled monument.
- 7.40 The closet scheduled monument is the Battle Abbey located approximately 1 km south of the site on the southern edge of the town centre of Battle..
- 7.41 The site is separated from the scheduled monument by the town centre of Battle and by the significant landform of Caldbec Hill. As such development on the site would not result in any direct impact to this historic asset or its immediate setting.

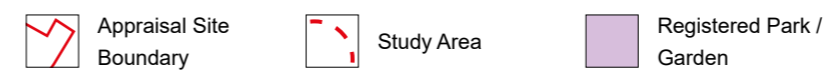
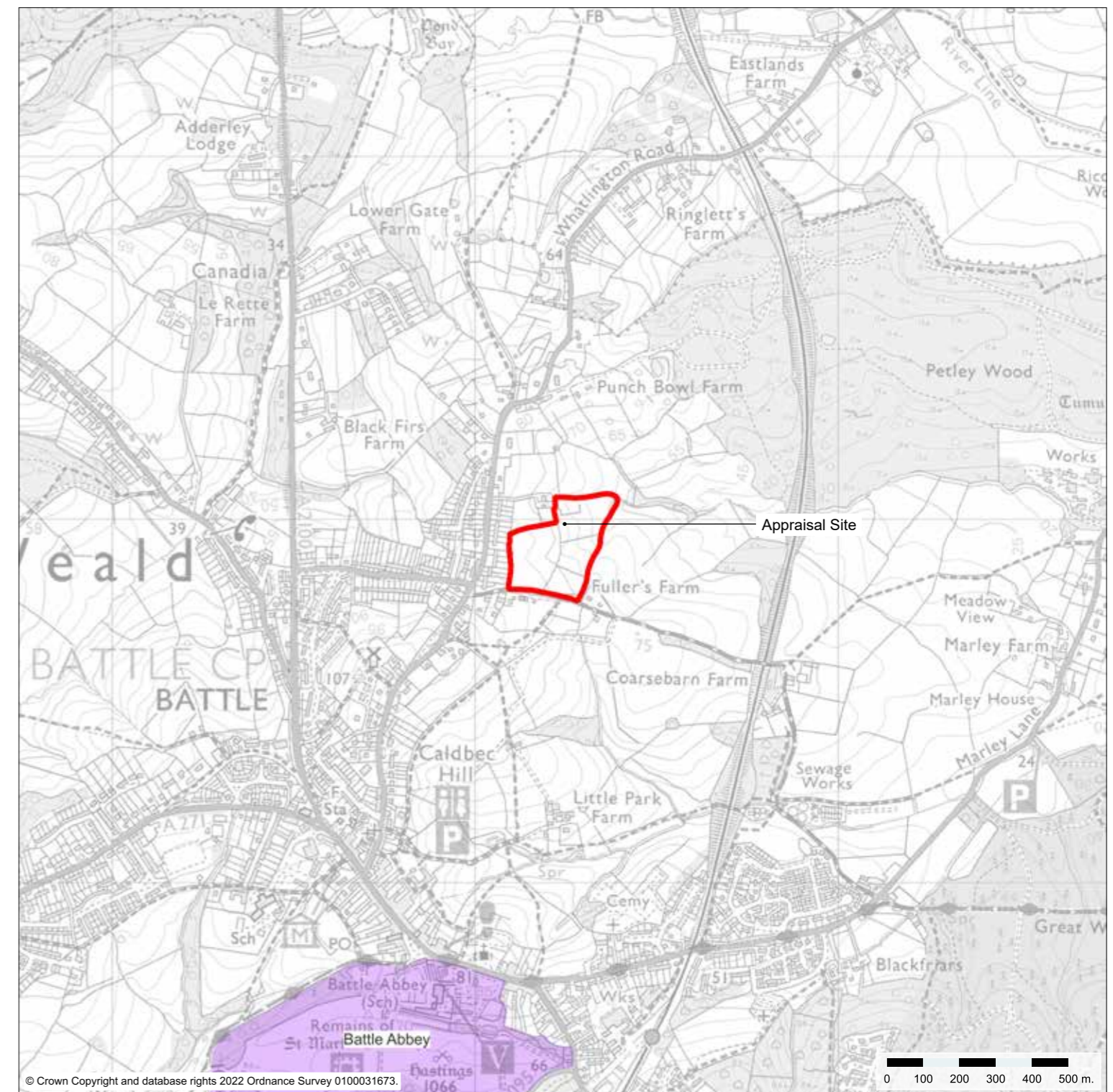
Fig. 11: Ordnance survey map indicating location and extent of Scheduled Monuments.



REGISTERED PARKS AND GARDENS

- 7.42 The site is not covered by or immediately adjacent to a registered historic park or garden.
- 7.43 The closet registered park and garden is the Battle Abbey located approximately 1.3 km south of the site on the southern edge of the town centre of Battle and associated with the site of Battle Abbey.
- 7.44 The site is separated from the historic park and garden by Battle Abbey, the town centre of Battle and by the significant landform of Caldbec Hill. As such development on the site would not result in any direct impact to this historic asset or its immediate setting.

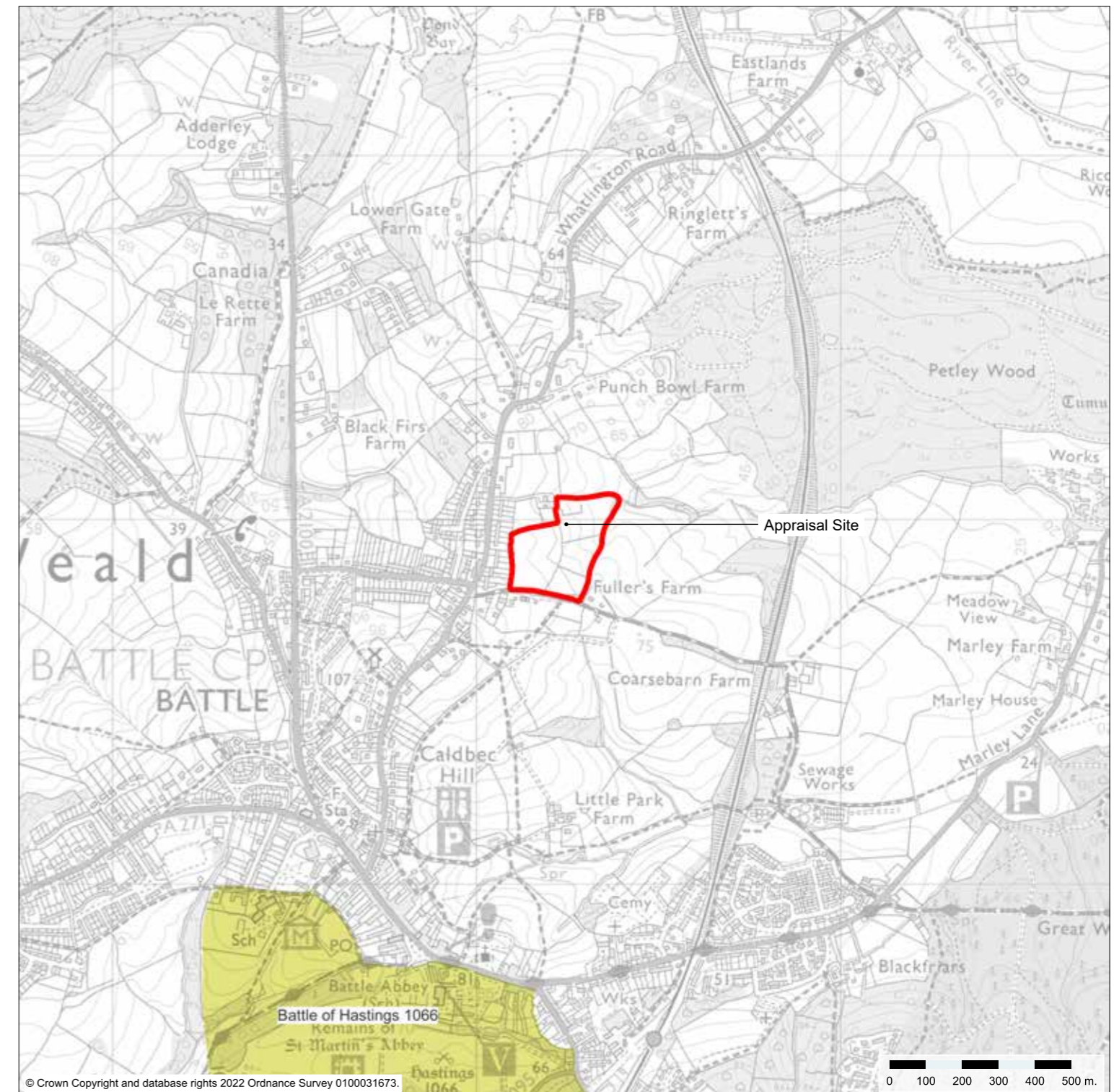
Fig. 12: Ordnance survey map indicating location and extent of Registered Parks and Gardens.



REGISTERED BATTLEFIELDS

- 7.45 The site is not covered by or immediately adjacent to a registered Battlefield Site.
- 7.46 The closet registered Battlefield site is the Battle of Hasting site located approximately 984m south west of the site on the southern edge of the town centre of Battle and associated with the site of Battle Abbey.
- 7.47 The site is separated from the Battlefield by Battle Abbey, the town centre of Battle and by the significant landform of Caldbec Hill. As such development on the site would not result in any direct impact to this historic asset or its immediate setting.

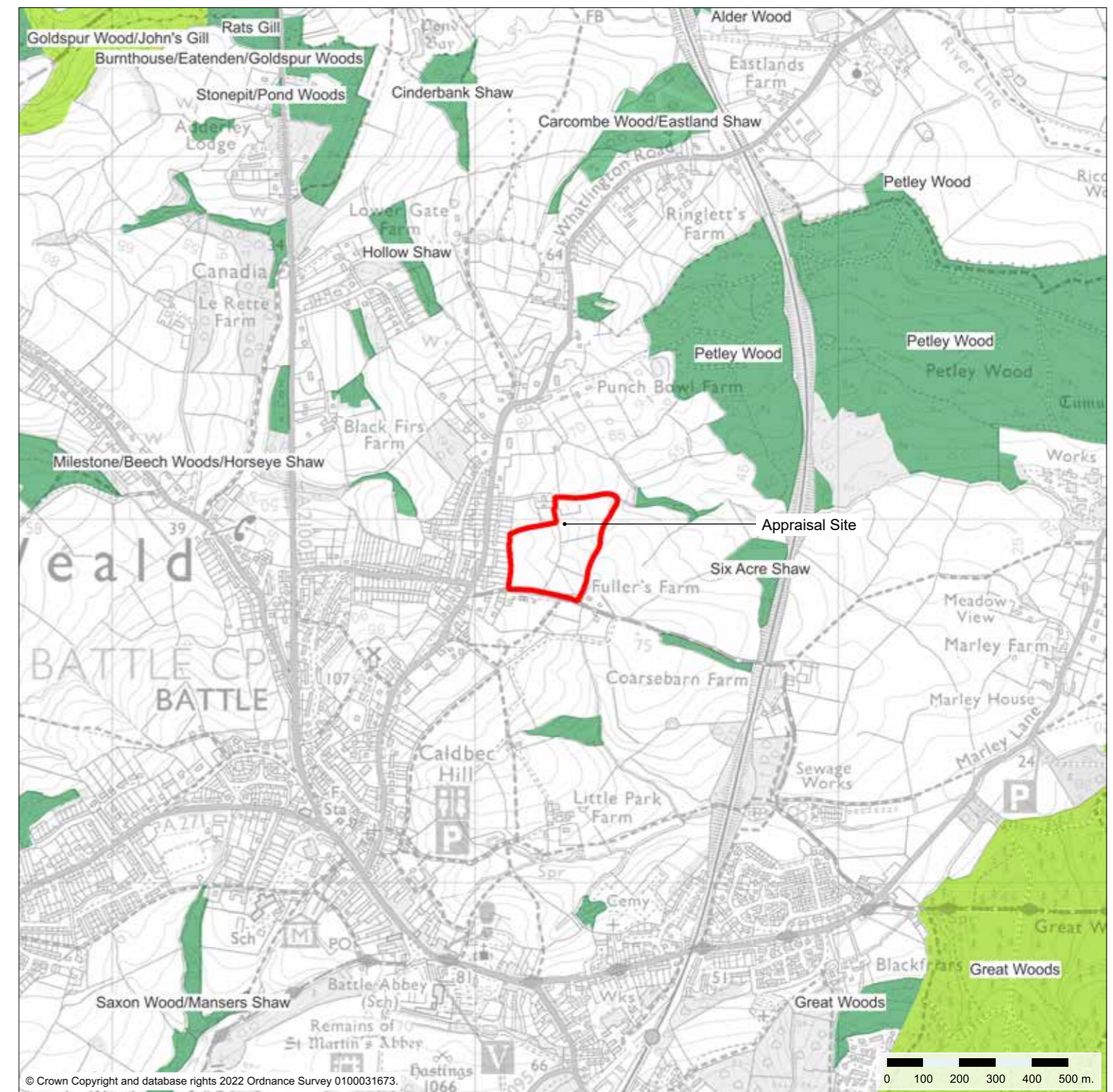
Fig. 13: Ordnance survey map indicating location and extent of Registered Battlefields.



ANCIENT WOODLAND

- 7.48 There are no areas of designated Ancient Woodland present on or immediately adjoining the site.
- 7.49 The closet area of ancient woodland is a small linear strip of woodland approximately 0.557 ha in size located 42m east of the north east corner of the site. Positioned to the south west of Petley Wood and north west of Six Acre Shaw.
- 7.50 The site is located beyond 30m from the Ancient Woodland therefore development of the site would have no direct impact upon this area of Ancient woodland.

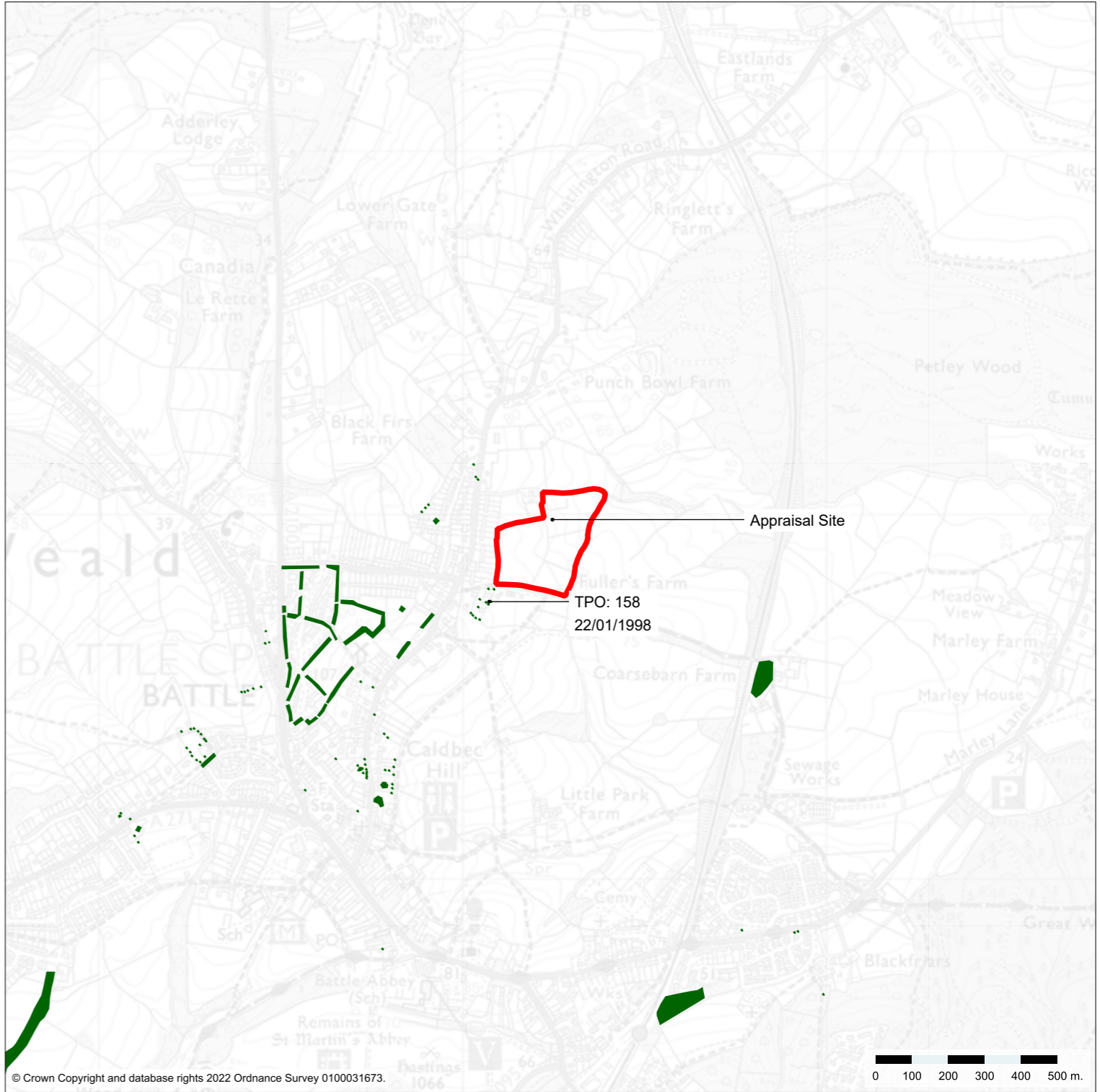
Fig. 14: Ordnance survey map indicating extent of surrounding Ancient Woodland.



TREE PRESERVATION ORDERS

- 7.51 There are not Tree Preservation Orders present on the site or immediately adjoining the boundary of the site.
- 7.52 The closest TPO is TPO:158 relating to 2 mature Oak trees located to the southern side of Uckham Lane and associated with the private driveways of nos 1 and 2 Caldbec Lodge.
- 7.53 It is considered unlikely that the development of the site would have any impact upon these trees.

Fig. 15: Ordnance survey map indicating location and extent of locally designated Tree Preservation Orders.

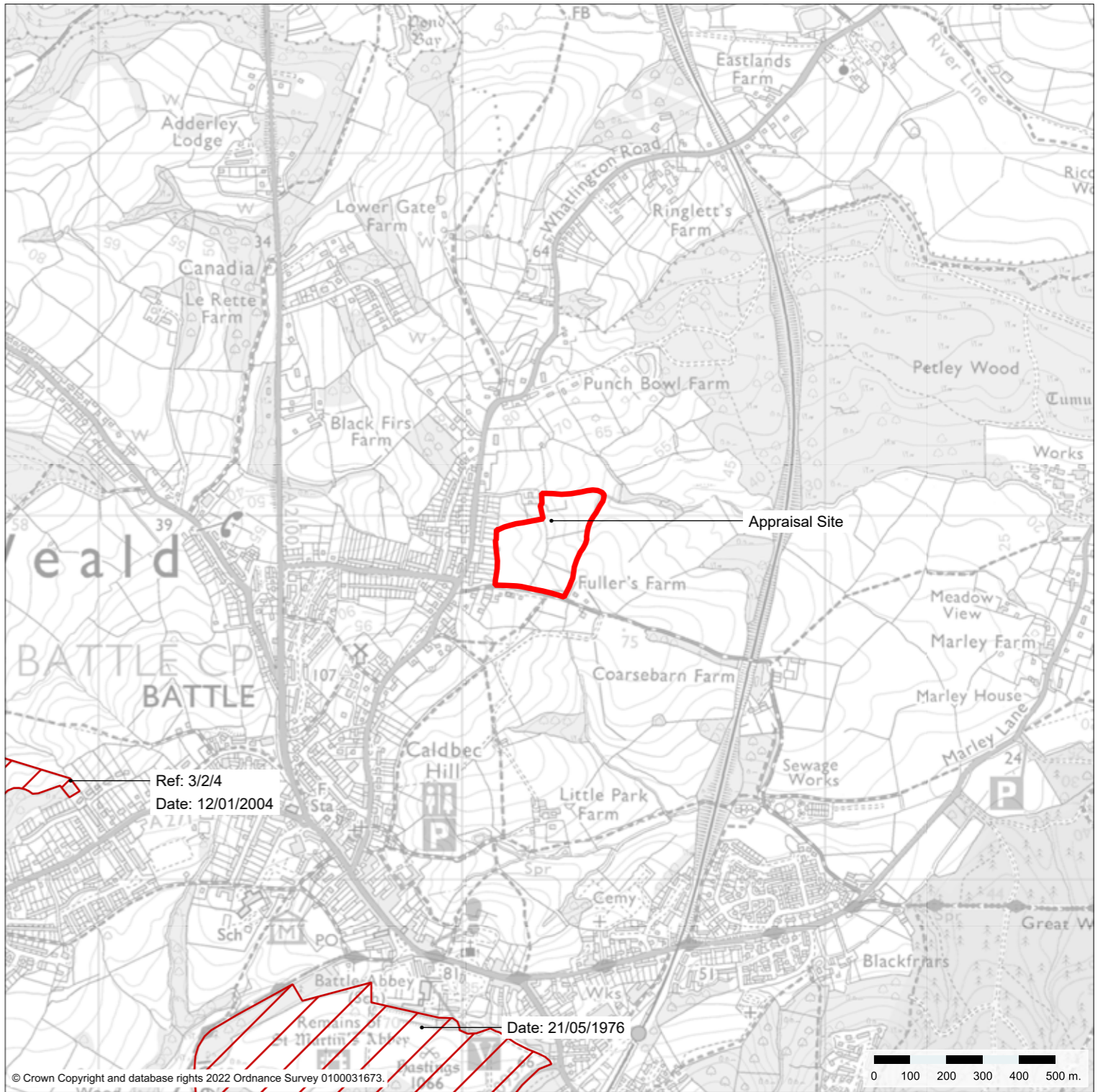


Appraisal Site Boundary
 Study Area
 Tree Preservation Order

ARTICLE 4 AREAS

7.54 The site is not covered by nor directly adjoining an area identified as a Article 4 site.

Fig. 16: Ordnance survey map indicating location and extent of locally designated Article 4 Areas.



HIGH WEALD AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

7.55 The entire settlement of Battle the proposed site and the entire surrounding areas all fall fully within the High Weald AONB.

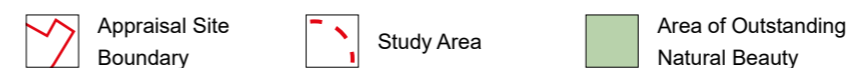
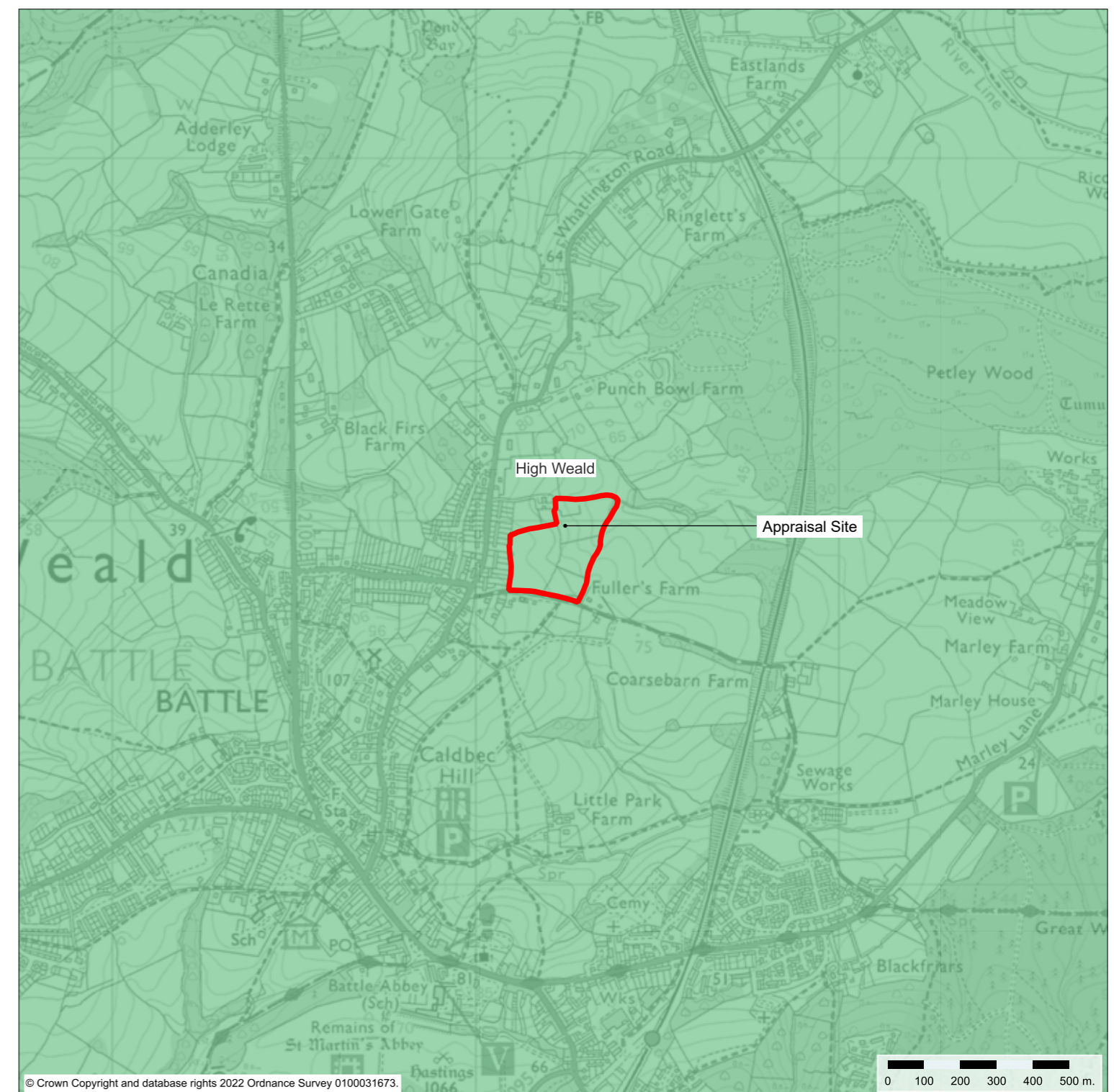
7.56 The following text is an extract from the **The High Weald AONB Management Plan 2019-2024**
'The High Weald occupies the ridged and faulted sandstone core of an area known from Saxon times as the Weald. It is an area of ancient countryside and one of the best surviving Medieval landscapes in Northern Europe. The High Weald's landscape

The mosaic of small mixed farms and woodlands is now considered to represent a quintessentially English landscape, yet for many years, until the advent of turnpikes, it was better known for the terrible state of its roads. At first glance the High Weald appears to be a densely wooded landscape but closer examination reveals a detailed agricultural tapestry of fields, small woodlands and farmsteads. Everything in the High Weald landscape is human scale. Wildflower meadows, alive with bees and grasshoppers, are now a rare delight, but the Medieval pattern of small fields with sinuous edges surrounded by thick wooded hedges, remain. Extensive views punctuated by church spires can be glimpsed along the ridge-top roads. Around almost every corner a harmonious group of traditional farm buildings comes into view with their distinctive steep, clay tile and hipped roofs. The High Weald is crossed by one of the most famous route ways in English history, the one that took King Harold's army from victory at Stamford Bridge to defeat at Hasting'

'Five defining components of character that have made the High Weald a recognisably distinct and homogenous area for at least the last 700 years.

1. *Geology, landform and water systems – a deeply incised, ridged and faulted landform of clays and sandstone with numerous gill streams.*
2. *Settlement – dispersed historic settlement including high densities of isolated farmsteads and late Medieval villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries.*
3. *Route ways – a dense network of historic route ways (now roads, tracks and paths).*
4. *Woodland – abundance of ancient woodland, highly interconnected and in smallholdings.*
5. *Field and Heath – small, irregular and productive fields, bounded by hedgerows and woods, and typically used for livestock grazing; with distinctive zones of lowland heaths, and inned river valleys*

Fig. 17: Ordnance survey map indicating extent of nearby Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.



*Geology, landform, water systems and climate***Key Characteristics**

- *Impressive coastal cliffs of interbedded sandstones and clays (Hastings Cliffs to Pett Beach SSSI and Hastings Cliffs Special Area of Conservation); natural, dynamic and evolving, and rich in Lower Cretaceous fossils.*
- A principal ridge (Forest Ridge) running east west from Horsham to Cranbrook with an attached ridge (Battle Ridge) extending to the sea at Fairlight.
- A pattern of faults and folds that distinguishes the Weald from the rest of the South and East of England, with a high concentration of springs associated with fault lines.
- Numerous small streams descending the main ridges in narrow steep-sided valleys (gills), historically often dammed to power industry with many 'pond bays' and 'hammer ponds' surviving.
- Distinctive outcrops of sandstone in the form of crags (popular with climbers) and inland sea cliffs, gill stream bed and banks, old quarries, and along road edges associated with the survival of rare cryptogam communities (ferns, lichens, liverworts and mosses).
- A high density of pits, quarries and ponds resulting from a long history of stone quarrying, surface mining and marl extraction.
- Locally-distinctive geological materials – sandstone, clay bricks and tiles, and Horsham stone – contributing to high quality vernacular architecture.
- Soils that are distinguished by their variability over short distances – mostly heavy and poorly drained with some coarse-grained, light and free draining.
- Heavily channelised and intensively managed river valleys in the eastern High Weald (Rother, Brede and Tillingham) originating from tidal and freshwater drowning in the Medieval period, with natural floodplain wetlands rare.
- A high density of ponds, five times higher than the national average with a wide range of pond types supporting significant species such as great crested newts and emerald dragonflies.
- An oceanic climate featuring cool temperatures relative to the latitude, a narrow annual temperature range with few extremes, and rain throughout the year.

7.57 The management plans list the following objectives in relation to geology, landform, water systems and climate.

- To restore the natural function of rivers, water courses and water bodies.

- To protect and enhance soils, sandstone outcrops, and other important landform and geological features.
- To help secure climatic conditions and rates of change which support continued conservation and enhancement of the High Weald's valued landscape and habitats.

*Settlement***Key Characteristics**

- *High density of historic farmsteads, with a long continuity of settlement in the same place; their position strongly influenced by topography and route ways.*
- *Separation between settlements formed by fields associated with individual historic farmsteads.*
- *Frequent – den and – fold place names echoing the area's history of pasturing cattle and pigs.*
- *Farmsteads typically arranged around route ways, with loose courtyard plan-types common and dispersed plan-types particularly characteristic. Tend to be relatively modest, typically comprising a farmhouse and a barn, often aisled to at least one side with small-scale ancillary structures, mostly for cattle, which face into their own, generally small, yards.*
- *High numbers of pre-1750 timber-framed farm buildings with typologies representing locally-distinctive historic agricultural practices, including oasts and other structures associated with the hop industry (hop-pickers' huts); where a complete range exists, these are rare and particularly significant.*
- *Hamlets occurring around the junction of route ways or small commons (which became greens or forstals), or as clusters of cottages serving a particular industry.*
- *Pockets of small wayside cottages (peasant settlement enclosing roadside commons or later worker cottages) interspaced with fields.*
- *Villages and towns of Medieval origin located at historic focal points or along ridge top roads; typically open areas used for meeting places and trade, with 'markets' granted for Burwash, Robertsbridge, Salehurst, Wadhurst, Cranbrook and Frant in the 13th century, and for Ticehurst, Lamberhurst, Heathfield, Rotherfield and Hawkurst in the early 14th century.*
- *Absence of large scale settlement extensions after AONB designation in 1983.*
- *No significant nucleated settlements before the 13th century (apart from Battle).*
- *Deer parks and later 18th century estates.*

- *Distinctive settlement types and pattern in the eastern High Weald relating to history of the Rother estuary and river trade.*
- *High concentrations of historic buildings in all settlement types, many listed, whose form and appearance reflects historic and sociocultural functions (such as the prevalence of craft industries), with locally distinctive typologies, including Medieval Wealden Hall houses (found either as rural farmhouses, or incorporated into the fabric of villages and towns, and often much disguised through later alterations), and features such as catslide roofs.*
- *Villages and hamlets typically unlit contributing to intrinsically dark landscapes.*
- *A limited palette of local materials: clay as tiles and brick, timber as weatherboard and framing, and some localised instances of stone.*
- *Green-ness of roads and streets with trees, hedges and verges dominant.*

7.58 The management plans list the following objectives in relation to settlements

- To reconnect settlements, residents and their supporting economic activity with the surrounding countryside.
- To protect the historic pattern and character of settlement.
- To enhance the architectural quality of the High Weald and ensure development reflects the character of the High Weald in its scale, layout and design.

*Route ways***Key Characteristics**

- A dense radiating network with a variety of origins including:
 - Drove ways, used for moving livestock, radiating out to pre-historic sites on the edge of the Weald
 - Ridgeways on high ground and often running east-west, closely associated with pre-historic sites and Medieval trading settlements
 - Roman roads cutting across these patterns and strongly associated with iron-working sites.
- Typically present by the 14th century, with many extending back into pre-history and predating settlements.
- Sunken route ways ('holloways') found on sloping land as a result of long use and erosion combined with water run-off.

- 'Braiding' common resulting from people, animals and vehicles finding alternative routes through impassable areas.
 - Earth banks, lynchets and ditches typically indicating the former width of the routeway or to separate users from farmland or woodland.
 - Wide flowery grass verges common, indicating the historic width of route ways and their function as linear common grazing.
 - Small-scale variations in habitat associated with a complex mixture of substrates, aspects and moisture levels supporting a rich biodiversity, especially invertebrates.
 - Frequent sandstone exposures, adding diverse assemblages of specialist plants and animals.
 - Linear nature facilitating foraging and dispersal, and contributing significantly to the ecological interconnectedness of the High Weald.
 - Veteran trees and ancient roadside coppice (often showing evidence of laying) frequent, providing niches for lichens and deadwood dependent beetles.
 - Many lost, stopped or diverted route ways evidenced by holloways, earth banks and depressions in the ground.
 - Associated heritage features – pre-1964 fingerposts, 'black and white' road signs, roadside milestones – common.
 - Archaeology and cultural associations in the eastern High Weald from trade and the practice of exporting heavy goods (e.g. timber and iron) by floating them at high tide on waterways navigable until the late 13th century.
- 7.59 The management plans list the following objectives in relation to route ways
- To maintain the historic pattern and features of route ways.
 - To enhance the ecological function of route ways.
- Woodland*
- Key Characteristics**
- Highly interconnected and structurally varied mosaic of many small woods, larger forests and numerous linear gill woodlands, shaws, wooded route ways and outgrown hedges.
 - High proportion of ancient woodland typically broadleaved coppice with a rich ground flora.
 - Many irregularly-shaped small woodlands interlinked with shaws, thick hedges and wooded sunken lanes; forming an intimate part of the farmed landscape.
- A few very large woods lying mostly along the high sandy ridges; remnants of the area's Medieval forests.
 - High density of gill woodlands (deeply incised ravines with particularly humid and relatively stable micro climates) – the oldest and least disturbed woodland in the South East – supporting a community of plants, vascular and non-vascular, not found together anywhere else in Europe, and important for rare plant species such as small-leaved lime, hay-scented buckler fern, Tunbridge filmy-fern, and rare invertebrates including beetles and molluscs.
 - Frequent patches of wet woodland associated with surface water in the form of steep sided streams, springs, wet flushes and water-filled extraction pits, important for regionally-distinctive species such as smooth-stalked sedge.
 - A stronghold for characteristic species such as dormice, and remnant populations of rare species such as pearl-bordered fritillary butterfly.
 - Considerable variability in woodland types and tree forms over short distances reflecting the variety of soils, micro-climates and drainage conditions (Principle NVC communities are W10 and W8 with some W15 and W16 on sandier ridges).
 - Wood-pasture and parkland, mostly originating from once extensive historic deer parks supporting veteran/ancient trees and their associated wildlife.
 - Nationally significant resource of epiphytic and dead-wood dependent species supported by a wealth of veteran trees.
 - A strong commercial woodland industry focused on coppice and locally grown hardwoods.
 - A culture of small-scale management by people using hand tools to produce a wide variety of products mostly for local use.
 - Visible evidence of historic use and exploitation (including coppice stools, stubs, pollards, boundary bank and ditch systems, routes and tracks; remains of Roman and Medieval iron-working such as slag heaps and ponds, and large earthworks relating to the harnessing of water power to fuel furnaces, forges and mills).
 - Trees used for boundary markers (including outgrown old laid hedges; stubs and pollards).
- 7.60 The management plans list the following objectives in relation to Woodland
- To maintain the existing extent of woodland and particularly ancient woodland.
- To enhance the ecological quality and functioning of woodland at a landscape scale.
 - To protect the archaeology and historic assets of AONB woodlands.
 - To increase the output of sustainably produced high-quality timber and underwood for local markets.
- Field and Heath*
- Key Characteristics**
- 7.61 A generally irregular field pattern with individual fields relatively small (<3 hectares).
- 7.62 Fieldscape dominated by historic farmsteads surrounded by their own fields resulting from Medieval farming in severalty i.e. land held by individuals rather than in common.
- 7.63 Strong influence exerted by topography with many field systems aligned to or 'hanging' from (at right angles to) linear features such as watercourses or ridge-top roads.
- 7.64 Predominantly pastoral mixed farming with an absence of industrial scale livestock farming.
- 7.65 Fields mostly used for grazing livestock with some small-scale horticulture and cropping.
- 7.66 Medieval character dominant with a high proportion of field systems created by assarting (woodland clearance) with sinuous mixed woody boundaries and thick hedges common.
- 7.67 Boundary ditch and bank features typical, along woodland edges or topped with hedges and veteran trees.
- 7.68 Nationally important fragments of unimproved neutral grassland (habitat type MG5 and variants), often small and isolated, supporting an incredibly rich variety of plants, animals, waxcaps and other fungi.
- 7.69 High proportion of good quality flowery grassland acting as a buffer for, and link to, fragments of unimproved grassland.
- 7.70 Traditional orchards scattered across the landscape providing dead and decaying wood for invertebrates, and a mosaic of other habitats.
- 7.71 Ashdown Forest (an extensive area of common land and one of the largest continuous blocks of lowland heath, semi-natural woodland and valley bog in the South East) supporting internationally important populations of nightjar and Dartford warbler.

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S2 - INFORMATION

7.72 Distinctive areas of wooded heath and Lowland heath scattered along the sandy ridges supporting a complex mosaic of plant communities, rare species such as marsh clubmoss, and more than half of UK's dragonfly species.

7.73 The management plans list the following objectives in relation to Field and Heath

- To secure agriculturally productive use for the fields of the High Weald, especially for local markets, as part of sustainable land management.
- To maintain the pattern of small irregularly shaped fields bounded by hedgerows and woodlands.
- To enhance the ecological function of field and heath as part of the complex mosaic of High Weald habitats.
- To protect the archaeology and historic assets of field and heath.

4. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK (NPPF)

4.1 The Government's planning policies for England are set out in the NPPF (latest update September 2023).

4.2 The following sections are considered to be relevant to the proposed site.

Section 15 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

4.3 Paragraph 176 of the NPPF states that:

'Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads. The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.'

4.4 Paragraph 177 of the NPPF states that:

'When considering applications for development within National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of:

a) the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;

b) the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and

c) any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.'

4.5 Paragraph 180 of the NPPF states that:

When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development

cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;

b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;

c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and

d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate

ROTHER DISTRICT COUNCIL, ROTHER LOCAL PLAN CORE STRATEGY 2014

Overall Spatial Strategy

4.6 The following general Core strategy Policies are relevant to the proposal site.

- Policy OSS2: Use of Development Boundaries
- Policy OSS3: Location of development
- Policy OSS4: General Development Considerations

Policy OSS2:

4.7 Use of Development Boundaries Development Boundaries around settlements will continue to differentiate between areas where most forms of new development would be acceptable and where they would not. Existing development boundaries will be reviewed by the Development and Site Allocations DPD, having regard to the: (i) Existing pattern, form and function of settlements, including of closely 'linked' settlements and important 'gaps' of countryside between them; (ii) Character and settings of individual towns and villages; (iii) Sensitivity to further development both within the main built up confines and in more rural fringes; (iv) The amount of land needed to fulfil development needs and requirements; (v) Availability of local infrastructure and services; (vi) Accessibility to facilities and services, and avoiding scattered and ribbon development; (vii) Environmental considerations, including the need to conserve designated areas of national and local landscape, archaeological, geological, ecological or historical importance; (viii) Following physical features, unless this may suggest a potential for development that is inappropriate.

Policy OSS3:

4.8 Location of development In assessing the suitability of a particular location for development, when both allocating land for development and determining planning applications, sites and/or proposals should accord with the relevant policies of this Core Strategy and be considered in the context of: (i) The spatial strategy for the particular settlement or area, and its distinct character; (ii) The capacity of, as well as access to, existing infrastructure and services, and of any planned or necessary improvements to them; (iii) The local need for affordable housing; (iv) Needs and priorities identified in approved Local Action Plans; (v) The low carbon and renewable energy potentials of the site; (vi) The character and qualities of the landscape; (vii) Making effective use of land within the main built-up confines of towns and villages, especially previously developed land, consistent with maintaining their character; (viii) Any constraints relating to

land stability, contamination, air quality, agricultural land quality and coastal erosion, and the ability to satisfactorily address these; (ix) The deliverability of development, including consideration of land ownership patterns and the viability of development; (x) The need for and access to employment opportunities.

Policy OSS4:

4.9 General Development Considerations In addition to considerations set out by other policies, all development should meet the following criteria: (i) It meets the needs of future occupiers, including providing appropriate amenities and the provision of appropriate means of access for disabled users; (ii) It does not unreasonably harm the amenities of adjoining properties; (iii) It respects and does not detract from the character and appearance of the locality; (iv) It is compatible with both the existing and planned use of adjacent land, and takes full account of previous use of the site; (v) In respect of residential development, is of a density appropriate to its context, having due regard to the key design principles.

Battle

4.10 With regards to the settlement of Battle the adopted Core Strategy sets out the following Strategic Objectives for the settlement.

- i) To reduce congestion and improve accessibility, especially by non-car modes;*
- ii) To enhance the commercial and tourism attractiveness of the town centre;*
- iii) To conserve the key characteristics of the town and its setting that contribute to the AONB;*
- iv) To provide increased opportunities for employment locally;*
- v) To improve the level of community and sports/recreation facilities;*
- vi) To preserve and enhance the historic character of Battle Abbey and Battlefield and maintain the town's physical identity;*
- vii) To make an appropriate contribution towards meeting local housing needs.**

4.11 Paragraph 11.7 states

'However, as the Battle Town Study demonstrates, there is a need to continue to support the town's role and foster economic vitality. This will entail allowing appropriate residential development, including affordable housing, as well as limited expansion of employment and retail floorspace. This would need to demonstrate an acceptable

impact on congestion problems as well as acceptable environmental impacts.

4.12 Regarding 'Future Housing Needs' paragraphs 11.8 to 11.10 states

'The level of housing growth for Battle identified by assessment of opportunities and based upon the relative service roles of towns and villages in the district suggests 475-500 dwellings to Battle over the Plan period particularly if there is found to be redevelopment potential in some broad locations. As evidenced in the Battle Town Study, Battle has a significant local housing need. The level of proposed development, coupled with effective affordable housing policies (see section 14) should greatly assist affordable housing to come forward.

Appendix 3 shows, this level of growth is achievable over the Plan period largely through outstanding commitments as well as unimplemented allocations mainly at Blackfriars that are intended to be carried forward. Taking these allocations into account, there would remain a need to find land for 145-170 dwellings up to 2028.

This is likely to require extension to the current development boundary and the Battle Town Study discusses more detailed options of how and where this may be achieved. Suitable sites will be further investigated, and consulted upon, and brought forward in the forthcoming Development and Site Allocations Plan. To discourage unnecessary use of the car, locations within walking or cycling distance of the centre will be favoured, subject to other considerations.

4.13 The following Settlement specific policies are relevant to the proposal site.

- Policy BA1: Policy Framework for Battle

Policy BA1: Policy Framework for Battle

'Proposals for development and change in Battle will:

(i) Maintain the essential physical form, local distinctiveness, character and setting of the town, particularly in and adjacent to the Conservation Area;

(ii) Implement the ESCC Battle Local Area Transport Strategy, particularly measures that minimise the demand for cross-town vehicular traffic; and improve pedestrian and cycle access to services/ facilities from new and existing development;

(iii) Provide for 475-500 net additional dwellings in Battle over the Plan period 2011-2028, by developing new housing via

opportunities both within the development boundary, and modest peripheral expansion opportunities that respects the setting of Battle within the High Weald AONB and supports community facilities;

(iv) Enable new local employment opportunities by providing for at least 10,000 sq m of employment floorspace within the town centre, adjacent to Station Approach, at sites on Marley Lane and at other sites as necessary (including by assessing the potential for mixed use with housing development);

(v) Enable growth in sustainable tourism by allowing the development of new tourist accommodation, particularly by the conversion and extension of suitable properties closely related to the town centre;

(vi) Maintain a vibrant and distinctive town centre and encouraging additional restaurants, cafes and/or retail service establishments as well as seeking opportunities for increased convenience shopping floorspace of some 1,000 sq m sales area within or adjacent to the town centre, as well as facilitating some additional comparison shopping floorspace;

(vii) Implement improvements to the provision of open space, sport and recreation facilities, in accordance with adopted standards and strategies;

(viii) Ensure that new development does not put pressure on local infrastructure, and that it makes appropriate contribution to community and other infrastructure;

(ix) Seek opportunities for habitat creation, restoration and enhancement, particularly in identified Biodiversity Opportunity Areas to the east and west of the town.'

Local Housing Needs

Policy LHN1: Achieving Mixed and Balanced Communities

'In order to support mixed, balanced and sustainable communities, housing developments should:

- (i) Be of a size, type and mix which will reflect both current and projected housing needs within the district and locally; (
- ii) In rural areas, provide a mix of housing sizes and types, with at least 30% one and two bedroom dwellings (being mostly 2 bed);
- (iii) In Bexhill, contribute to increased provision of family dwellings, unless site circumstances make this inappropriate;
- (iv) In larger developments (6+ units), provide housing for a range of

differing household types;

(v) In relation to affordable housing, contribute to an overall balance of 65% social/affordable rented and 35% intermediate affordable housing;

(vi) Ensure that affordable housing is integrated with market housing, where practical;

(vii) Provide a proportion of homes to Lifetime Homes Standard.

4.14 With regards to Local Housing Needs the adopted Core Strategy sets out the following Strategic Objectives.

- i) To provide and maintain a housing stock that supports sustainable, inclusive, communities in both towns and rural areas;
- ii) To respond to the changing mix and needs of households, including more older person households;
- iii) To increase the availability of affordable housing;
- iv) To provide housing choices that encourage young people to live locally;
- v) To make effective use of existing housing stock, including bringing empty homes back into use.

4.15 Paragraph 15.10 states

'There is a much greater stock of smaller and rented property in urban areas than the rural areas and this works against the need to attract younger people, particularly to rural areas. Housing affordability in rural Rother is especially acute, particularly as a product of high house prices associated with a stock of larger dwellings in these areas. Providing smaller dwellings (both market and affordable), as well as more affordable housing, should go some way to provide for this need. It could allow older residents to downsize and stay within villages, as well as provide housing for young people.'

4.16 Paragraph 15.12 states

'It is appropriate to seek to redress the limited number of smaller homes in the rural areas of the district by setting a target of 30% 1 and 2 bed market homes in rural areas, mainly 2 bed homes. This approach offers flexibility in terms of occupation in the long-term, relevant to both young and older households.'

Policy LHN2: Affordable Housing

On housing sites or mixed use developments, the Council will expect the following percentages of affordable housing within the district:

- (i) In Bexhill and Hastings Fringes, 30% on-site affordable housing on schemes of 15 or more dwellings (or 0.5 hectares or more);
- (ii) In Rye, 30% on-site affordable housing on schemes of 10 or more dwellings (or 0.3 hectares or more);
- (iii) In Battle, 35% on-site affordable housing on schemes of 10 or more dwellings (or 0.3 hectares or more);
- (iv) In the Rural Areas: (
 - a) 40% on-site affordable housing on schemes of 5 dwellings or more; or
 - (b) A financial contribution, on a sliding scale up to the equivalent of providing 40% affordable housing, in lieu of on-site provision on all residential schemes of less than 5 dwellings.

Where it can be demonstrated that these requirements would either render otherwise suitable development unviable, or where the local need for affordable housing would no longer justify the above levels, the Council will respectively expect the proportion of affordable housing to be the most that does not undermine viability, or is needed locally. An exception to this may be made when the main purpose of the housing is to support business development, where job creation is a priority.

In normal circumstances, the full affordable housing obligation should be met on-site, and of a comparable design quality to the market units onsite. Affordable units should be 'peppercotted' individually, or in small clusters. In all cases, planning permission will be subject to a legal agreement to ensure nomination rights and that the affordable housing will remain available.'

4.17 With regards to Affordable housing provision paragraphs 15.27 to 15.30 states,

'These studies show that there is a real need for affordable housing in the district, and the potential to deliver affordable homes as part of new housing. Affordability issues are amplified in the rural areas. Therefore, while it is considered right to keep the threshold in Bexhill at 15, lower thresholds in Rye and, Battle, of 10 dwellings, and in the rural areas, where contributions will be expected from all (1 or more net units) housing schemes, will help address local needs.'

At the same time, given the need for regeneration and job creation in the district, it is concluded that lowering percentage requirements for affordable housing in Bexhill (30%), Battle (35%) and Rye (30%), will help kick-start the regeneration effort in these areas, as well as support overall housing supply. In addition, where housing is used as enabling development in mixed use schemes, consideration may be made to other factors, notably the importance of providing jobs locally.

In all cases, affordable housing should be provided on-site, with the exception of sites in rural areas, where schemes of less than 5 units should provide a payment in lieu of on-site provision. Further advice on the provision of commuted payments and the mechanisms for the delivery of affordable housing will be set out in a revised Supplementary Planning Document. The Council will continue to develop categories of local designations for key workers through its Housing Allocation Policy, with the intention that this will include land based workers.

All affordable housing should be indistinguishable from market dwellings and 'pepper potted' individually, or in clusters of no more than 5% of the total housing on the site, up to a maximum cluster of 5 houses or 10 flats. Successfully integrating the affordable rented and shared ownership units provides a sustainable, balanced and mixed community which brings many social and economic benefits.

Environment

Policy EN3: Design Quality

New development will be required to be of high design quality by:

- (i) Contributing positively to the character of the site and surroundings, including taking opportunities to improve areas of poor visual character or with poor townscape qualities, and
- (ii) Demonstrating robust design solutions tested against the following Key Design Principles as appropriate (expanded in Appendix 4), tailored to a thorough and empathetic understanding of the particular site and context:
 - (a) Character, Identity, Place-Making & Legibility
 - (b) Continuity and Enclosure
 - (c) Quality of Public Realm, Ease of Movement, and 'Secured By Design'
 - (d) Diversity
 - (e) Landscape Setting of Buildings and Settlements
 - (f) Design in Context (Understanding & appraisal of site and wider

setting, and incorporation of existing site features into proposals)

(g) Building Appearance & Architectural Quality

(h) Sustainable Design and Construction

Policy EN5: Biodiversity and Green Space

Biodiversity, geodiversity and green space will be protected and enhanced, by multi-agency working where appropriate, to:

- (i) Maintain and develop a district-wide network of green infrastructure where possible linking areas of natural green space;
- (ii) Protect and enhance the international, national and locally designated sites, having due regard to their status;
- (iii) Establish a major area of accessible open space at Combe Valley Countryside Park, between Bexhill and Hastings;
- (iv) Enhance the nature conservation value and multi-functional nature of the Romney Marsh Biodiversity Opportunity Area;
- (v) Support opportunities for management, restoration and creation of habitats in line with the opportunities identified for the Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) and targets set out in the Sussex Biodiversity Action Plan;
- (vi) Continue to develop the wetland habitat at Bewl Water Reservoir, with compatible recreational uses; (vii) Increase accessibility to the countryside from urban areas, especially in the Hastings and Bexhill fringes;
- (viii) Ensure that development retains, protects and enhances habitats of ecological interest, including ancient woodland, water features and hedgerows, and provides for appropriate management of these features;
- (ix) Require developers to integrate biodiversity into development schemes by avoiding adverse impacts from development on biodiversity or habitat, or where wholly unavoidable, provide appropriate mitigation against or compensation for any losses. In any event, developers will also be expected to consider and promote opportunities for the creation and/or restoration of habitats appropriate to local context.

BATTLE CIVIL PARISH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2019-2028 (JUNE 2021)

Housing and Development

Policy HD1: Development Boundaries

'The Plan designates Development Boundaries for Battle and Netherfield as shown on Maps 1 and 2 in Appendix C of the Plan, for the purpose of identifying policies, which relate to the acceptability, or otherwise of development proposals falling within or outside the development boundary, as set out within the development plan.'

Policy HD2: Site Allocations

The Neighbourhood Plan allocates the following sites for residential development:

Netherfield

- NE NS102 (part of NE06) White House Poultry Farm: approximately 23 dwellings

- NE05a and NE05r Swallow Barn off B2096: approximately 10 dwellings

Battle and the hamlet of Telham

- BA31a Glengorse: approximately 15 dwellings

- BA36a Land at Caldbec House, Caldbec Hill: approximately 5 dwellings

- BA11 Blackfriars: approximately 220 dwellings

The Plan designates these sites for housing development as shown on the Proposals maps, Refer to Appendix C to the Plan: Maps 3 and 4a and 4b. Any sites that are allocated in Battle Civil Parish will be subject to compliance with other relevant policies in the development plan and the following criteria:

1. the provision of a range of house types in accordance with Policy HD3 of this Plan;
2. the provision of appropriate landscaping and accessible green space within the site;
3. an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) in line with best practice and Natural England's standing advice;
4. a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain in the form of on-site or off-site enhancements;

5. the provision of appropriate vehicular and pedestrian access into the site and where appropriate links to the footpath and cycle network;

6. where appropriate the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, which has been submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by Rother District Council;

7. the layout is planned to ensure future access to existing water and/or wastewater infrastructure for maintenance and upsizing purposes; and

8. the provision of the necessary infrastructure required, as a result of the development, to make it acceptable, with special attention to education provision and flood prevention (fluvial and pluvial).

4.18 Under paragraph 5.1.2 this document states,

'The current residual housing allocation for Battle stands at 14 dwellings and for Netherfield at 23 dwellings as at 1 April 2020'

Policy HD3: Housing Mix

'Housing developments will be expected to deliver a range of house types, including affordable housing in accordance with the requirements set by Policy DHG1 of the Development and Site Allocations Local Plan, which may include shared ownership homes. Housing developments will also be encouraged, where appropriate, to include an element of single level dwellings and, where practicable, sheltered accommodation to meet the needs of the elderly and people with disabilities, thus enabling them to remain independent and within the community for as long as is possible.'

4.19 Under paragraph 5.1.3 this document states,

'The Framework sets out that at least 35% of homes on major sites should be affordable with exemptions for Build to Rent, purpose built elderly or student accommodation, self-build or wholly affordable proposals to provide a majority of 2-3 bedroom dwellings. The intention is to conform with RDC's DaSA policy DHG1 on schemes of 10 or more dwellings (or 0.3 hectares).'

Policy HD4: Quality of Design

'Proposals for all development must plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design, at the same time demonstrating they have sought to conserve local distinctiveness and the aesthetic qualities of traditional rural settlements and buildings found in the conservation areas and their setting.'

Applications, which propose sympathetic designs that reflect the connections between people and places with regard to the existing density, scale, massing, landscape and biodiversity considerations will be supported. Innovative design will be supported where it is proposed in accordance with the Battle CP Design Guidelines and the High Weald Housing Design Guide. Applications must give priority to the use of local vernacular building materials. The Battle CP Design Guidelines (see Annexe 1 to the Plan) and the High Weald Housing Design Guide will become mandatory sources for the local planning authority to assess the impact of the planning proposals.'

Policy HD5: Protection of Landscape Character

'Development proposals, which have the potential to have an impact on the landscape should be informed by landscape and visual assessment to identify site characteristics and views, which may be affected and to inform required landscape mitigation. The design of new landscape features should happen at an early stage in the design process to ensure they are well integrated into new developments. New development proposals should consider and correctly interpret the landscape character of their location to produce the most appropriate locally distinctive design solution for the development supported from a biodiversity perspective. Landscape schemes should therefore:

1. integrate new development sympathetically with its surroundings;
2. enhance the setting of new buildings;
3. create a high-quality environment in, which to live and work;
4. promote quality landscape schemes, which are sensitive to the locality and provide local distinctiveness; and
5. species chosen for landscape schemes should be native and of local provenance where possible.

Developers will be expected to submit a landscape led master plan to accompany all major development proposals and particularly those in sensitive locations, in the Green Gap. Landscaping schemes should seek to retain natural and semi natural habitats. The long-term management of soft landscape features should be secured.

(The definition of major development is defined by the Government as a housing development of 10 or more dwellings or a site area of more than 0.5 hectares.)'

Policy HD6: Integration of New Housing

'Proposals for new housing must ensure that the new homes are visually integrated with their surroundings.'

Policy IN3: Parking and New Development

Car Parking should where possible be accommodated within the curtilage of the dwelling in the form of a garage and/or parking space and should be in accordance with East Sussex County Council Parking Standards for Development, which seek to provide an appropriate level. Development proposals will be supported only if they include the appropriate level of off-street parking consistent with the current East Sussex County Council Parking Standards. Proposed developments not meeting the ESCC Parking Standards for adequate off-street parking will only be supported where they make provision for equivalent off-street parking nearby.'

Policy IN4: Pedestrian Provision and Safety

'All new housing developments must provide safe pedestrian access to link up with existing footway networks, for example ensuring that residents can walk safely to public transport services, schools and other key community services, including retail and medical facilities. The Plan supports highways or other transport improvements that facilitate safe access for pedestrians and cyclists through and between all parts of the community, and the footpath linkages between settlements.'

The Neighbourhood Plan will, where appropriate, require proposals to:

1. provide safe links connected to the existing network for cycling and walking between the railway station, the town centre, and all the Battle schools, with due regard to the needs of all users including those with mobility issues; and
2. provide links for future developments of the cycling and walking network, to provide safe offroad routes (e.g. Battle Schools Greenway) and extend access to the public transport nodes.'

Policy EN2: Conservation of the Natural Environment, Ecosystems and Biodiversity

'Planning proposals will not be supported where development would result in an unacceptable loss, or damage to, hedges, ditches, verges, trees and green spaces during or as a result of development unless the benefits of the proposed development outweigh the amenity value of the trees or hedgerows in question. Development proposals must also be designed to retain well established

features of the environment, and ecosystem, provide net gains for biodiversity, including hedges, ditches, verges, trees and green spaces of good arboricultural and/or amenity wherever possible together with the habitats alongside them including ponds and green corridors. Proposals should protect Local Wildlife Sites and protected and notable species and habitats including town dwelling species. Where possible, development proposals should incorporate swift bricks or install swift boxes into building designs to support the vulnerable swift population of Battle town.

The Battle Character Appraisal (Annexe 2) will be used as a reference to assess the impact of the proposals.'

Policy EN3: The High Weald AONB and Countryside Protection

'Development within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) will only be supported where it conserves and enhances the natural beauty of the parish and has regard to the High Weald AONB Management Plan. In particular, where relevant to the proposal or its location, development must demonstrate that it will:

1. take opportunities to restore the natural function of all watercourses to improve water quality, to prevent flooding and enhance wetland habitats;
2. reflect the settlement pattern of the neighbourhood, use local materials that enhance the appearance of the development and support woodland management;
3. relate well to historic route ways such as ancient drove ways and not divert them from their original course or damage their rural character by loss of banks, hedgerows, verges or other important features;
4. not result in the loss or degradation of Ancient Woodland or historic features within it and, where appropriate will contribute to its on-going management; and
5. conserve and enhance the ecology and productivity of fields, trees and hedgerows, retain and reinstate historic field boundaries, and direct development away from medieval or earlier fields, especially where these form coherent field systems with other medieval features.'

Policy EN5: Locally Important Historic Buildings, Other Structures

and Other Non-designated Heritage Assets

'The heritage assets set out in Schedule 2 and illustrated in Map 8 are identified as non-designated heritage assets, which are of substantial local architectural and historic significance and contribute to the Parish distinctiveness. Proposals affecting such assets will be assessed based on the scale of any loss or harm set against the significance of the asset.'

5. VISIBILITY ANALYSIS

5.1 The following section has utilised a range of desktop and field observation techniques to establish an understanding of the general visibility characteristics of the site and the surrounding landscape. This includes

- Inter visibility Index Analysis
- Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)
- Direct Field Observations / Photography

LANDSCAPE VISIBILITY INDEX

5.2 A Landscape Visibility Index (LVI) is a metric used to quantify the visibility or visual quality of a landscape. It assesses the extent to which certain features, such as natural elements or man-made structures can be seen from a particular location. The used software calculates the visual exposition of each data point - a pixel - for a given terrain model. The Index is calculated as the proportion of positive views, returning 1.0 when all views are positive.

5.3 The LVI involves taking into consideration factors such as distance, elevation, and obstruction by intervening features such as woodland or development. An analysis of the proportion of visible or obstructed features within the study area is performed. The result is a numerical value that indicates the inter visibility or visual impact of a landscape.

Incoming Views

5.4 Figure 18 opposite illustrates the Visibility Index for the study area based upon a transmitter height of 1.6m above ground level its illustrates how visible any given location is from the rest of the study area account only of general topography major built form and woodland vegetation cover as shown. This in effect means that the resulting analysis will give an over estimation of visibility as it doesn't consider the screening effect of things such as

- Boundary Hedges and Individual Trees
- Fences / Wall
- Domestic garden vegetation, etc

5.5 This figure shows that generally the study area has a low inter visibility index with over 70% of the overall study area being visible from less than 4% of the study area

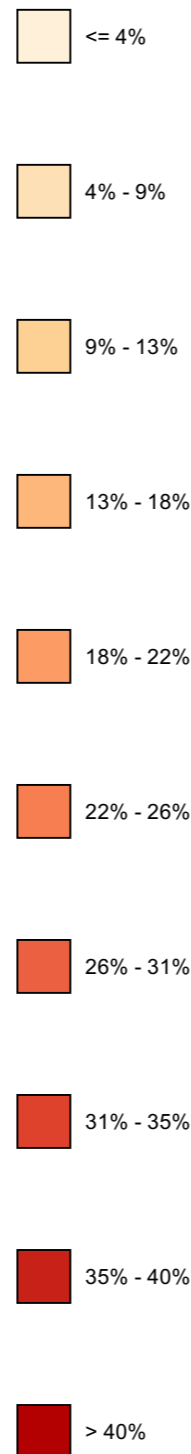
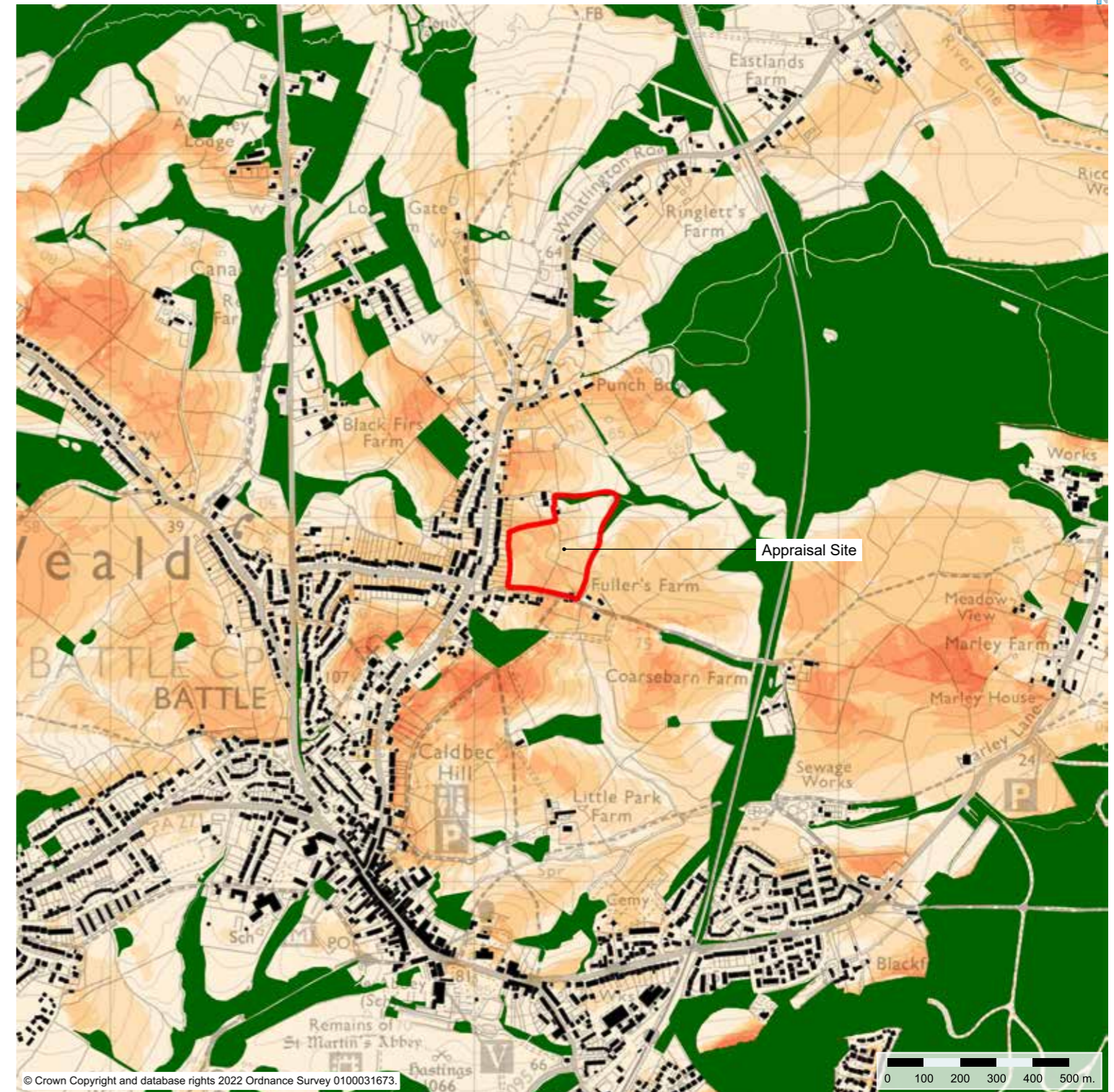


Fig. 18: Ordnance Survey map indicating the Incoming Views of the Landscape Visibility Index of the study area.



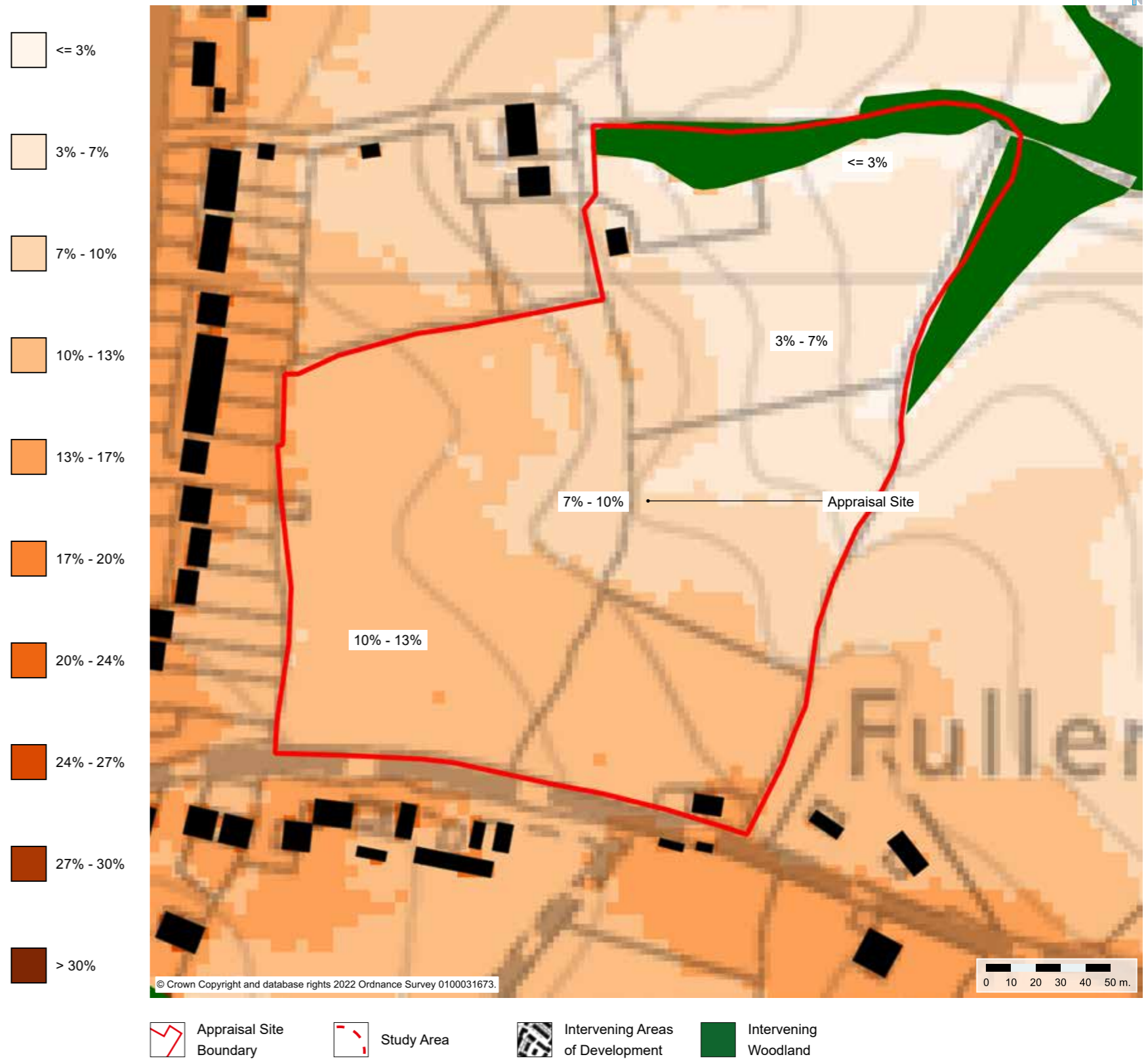
© Crown Copyright and database rights 2022 Ordnance Survey 0100031673.

Appraisal Site Boundary
 Study Area
 Intervening Areas of Development
 Intervening Woodland

Outgoing Views

- 5.6 Figure 19 opposite illustrates the Visibility Index for the site area based upon a transmitter height of 1.6m above ground level its illustrates how visible the surrounding study area is from specific locations within the site. I.E. how much of the study area can you see when standing within the interior of the site looking outwards.
- 5.7 Again this takes account only of general topography major built form and woodland vegetation cover as shown. This in effect means that the resulting analysis will give an over estimation of visibility as it doesn't consider the screening effect of things such as
- Boundary Hedges and Individual Trees
 - Fences / Wall
 - Domestic garden vegetation, etc
- 5.8 This figure shows that generally the site has a very low inter visibility index with less than 13% of the overall study area being visible from the site as a whole and less than 10% visible from circa 50% of the site.
- 5.9 This clearly shows that the north east portion of the site is extremely visually contained with little inter visibility between it and areas outside of the site. Even the elevated south western corner of the sits is only visible from 10-13% of the whole study area.

Fig. 19: Ordnance Survey map indicating the Outgoing Views of the Landscape Visibility Index of the study area.



**ZONE OF THEORETICAL VISIBILITY**

- 5.10 A series of Zone of Theoretical Visibility diagrams (ZTV) for the proposal site are shown in figures 20 to 29 on the following pages. These diagrams has been produced using QGIS computer software and is based upon standard 5m OS Terrain 5 Data. They are intended to provide an initial broad-based assessment of the likely visibility shed of individual locations within the proposal site, to help establish potential publicly accessible locations from where views of the site might be gained.
- 5.11 The ZTV's are not intended as an accurate representation of precise areas from where views will be gained. The ZTV diagrams has considered only the screening effect of landform, major built up areas and major woodlands and does not take into account localised variations in landform, the presence of intervening vegetation cover, or other built structures such as walls or fences that could further affect visibility.
- 5.12 The diagrams have been based upon following parameters:
- Significant areas of development having been given a generic height of 9m.
 - Significant areas of woodland having been given a generic height of 10m
 - Transmitter heights of 9 m. above existing ground level located at OSGB36 (British National Grid) coordinates:
 - Transmitter 1: 575111.436861298, 116951.7439916362
 - Transmitter 2: 575154.5970175923, 116864.92758529769
 - Transmitter 3: 575281.5970177216, 116806.38852273794
 - Transmitter 4: 575242.9017051822, 116977.54086666252
 - Transmitter 5: 575221.07358016, 116906.10336658968
 - Transmitter 6: 575300.4485802411, 116874.8494603078
 - Transmitter 7: 575226.5306114154, 117041.5369604778
 - Transmitter 8: 575300.9446739915, 116989.4471166747
 - Transmitter 9: 575318.8040490098, 116919.99399160386
 - Transmitter 10: 575366.9251428088, 117052.94711673947
 - Receptor viewing height of 1.63m above ground level.
- 5.13 These diagrams show that the site generally has a very small and contained visual envelope. Locations in the higher south western parts of the site being more visible than the lower areas in the north east of the site.
- 5.14 Typically there are very limited potential views to the south and west of the site with views being effectively contained by landform and built form.
- 5.15 The main potential viewing directions are to the north, east and south east of the site and in these directions they are generally restricted to within 1km of the site. In these areas however the landscape comprises of predominantly privately owned farmland and woodland with little to no development and few to no public access routes. This part of the study area is also heavily vegetated so in reality at ground level at a human viewing scale views within this area are highly likely to be locally contained by intervening vegetation.
- 5.16 There is some limited potential for some longer distance views to the north west from locations on the western most boundary of the site and to the south east from the south east corner of the site. However as previously explained these diagrams do not take full account of all vegetation cover and built form within the landscape and direct field observations have demonstrated that in reality views from these locations do not exist.

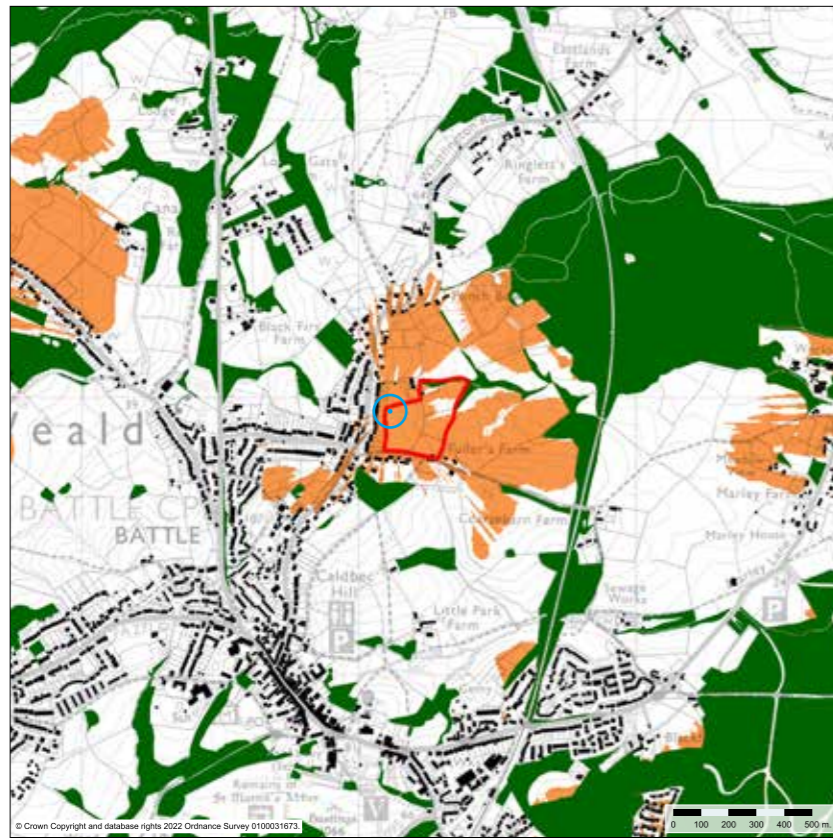


Fig. 20: Transmitter 1 Zone of Theoretical View

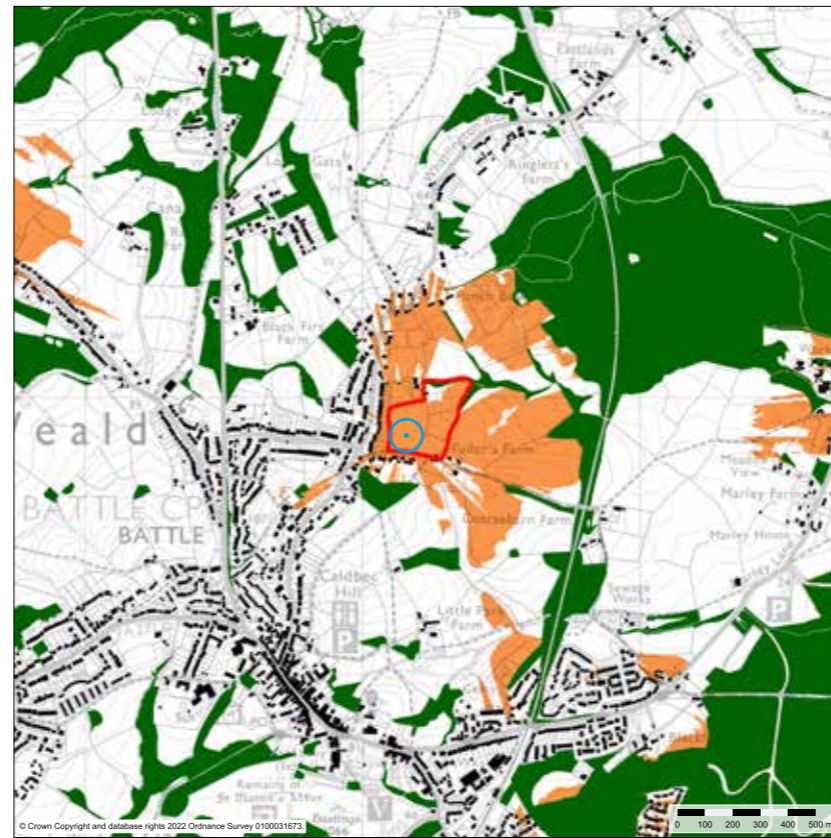


Fig. 21: Transmitter 2 Zone of Theoretical View

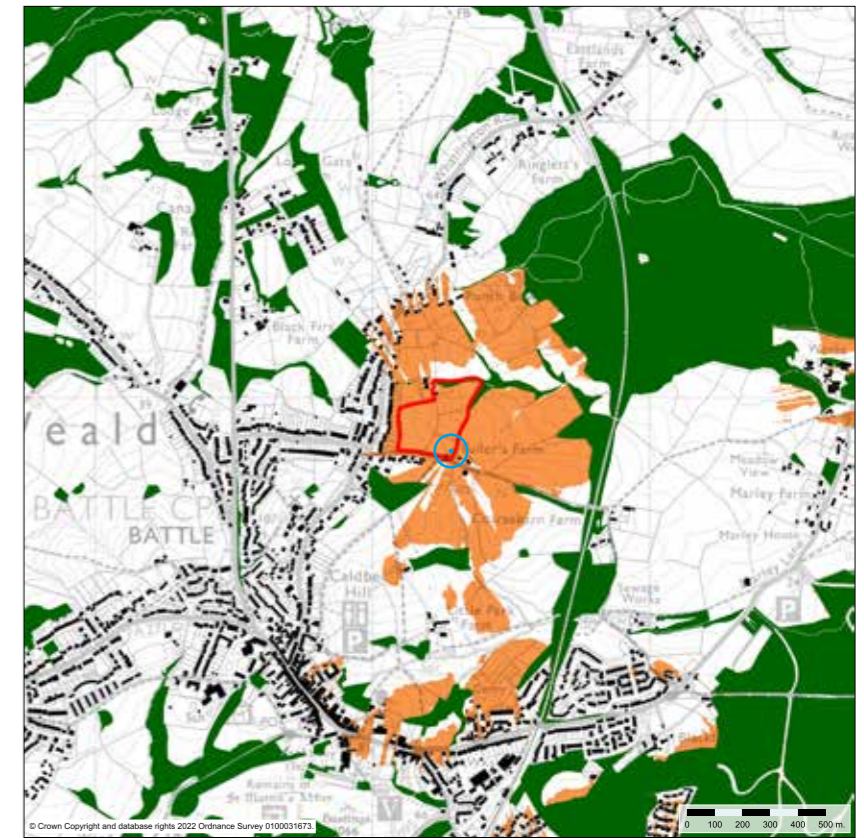


Fig. 22: Transmitter 3 Zone of Theoretical View

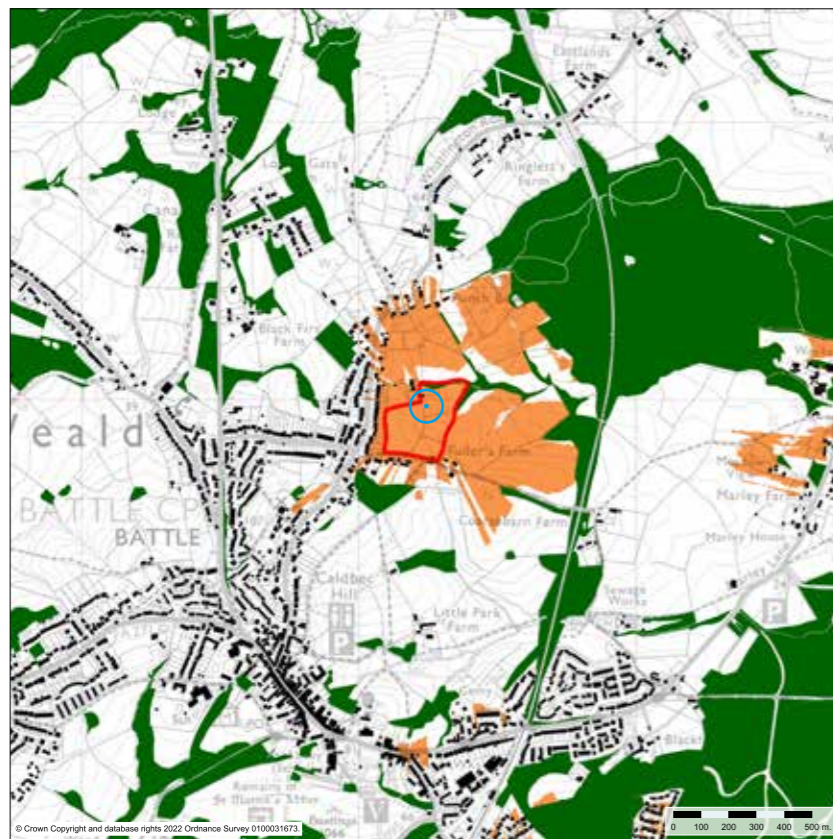


Fig. 23: Transmitter 4 Zone of Theoretical View

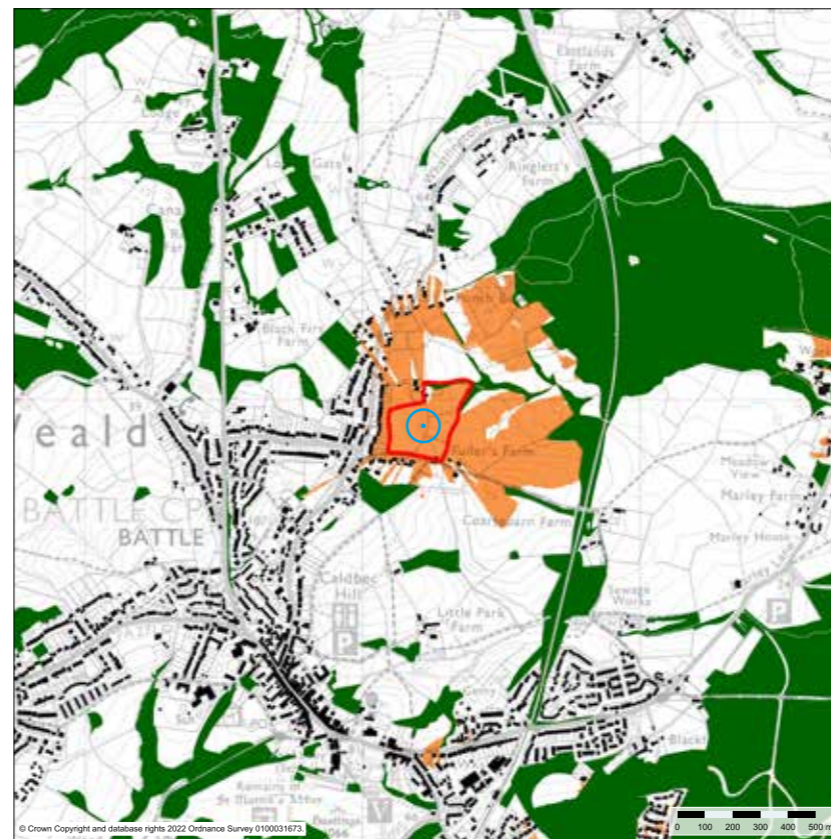


Fig. 24: Transmitter 5 Zone of Theoretical View

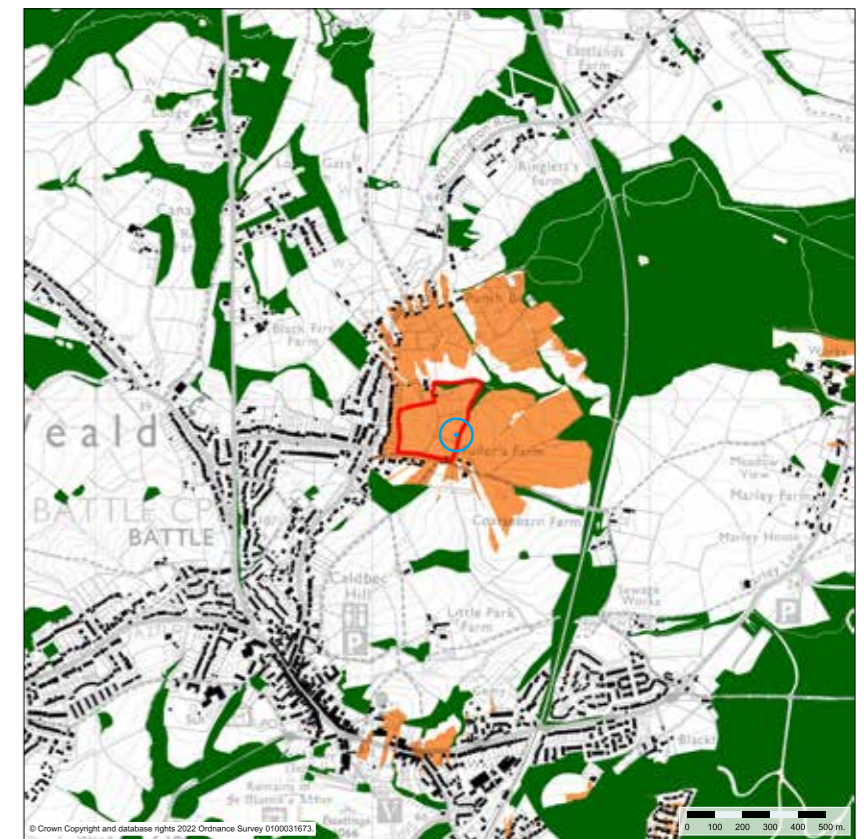


Fig. 25: Transmitter 6 Zone of Theoretical View

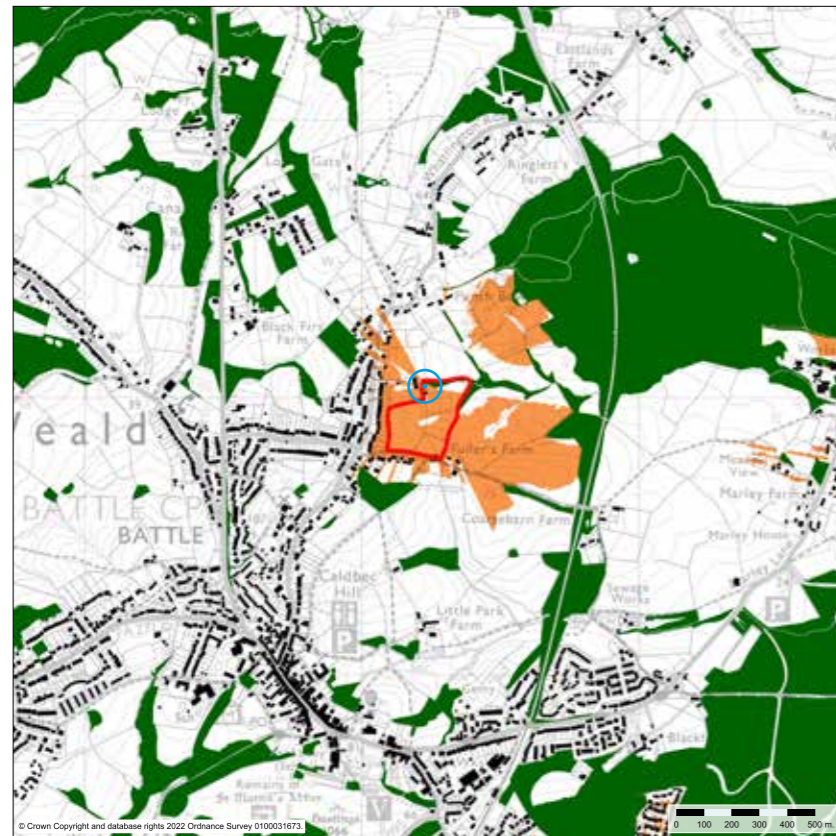


Fig. 26: Transmitter 7 Zone of Theoretical View

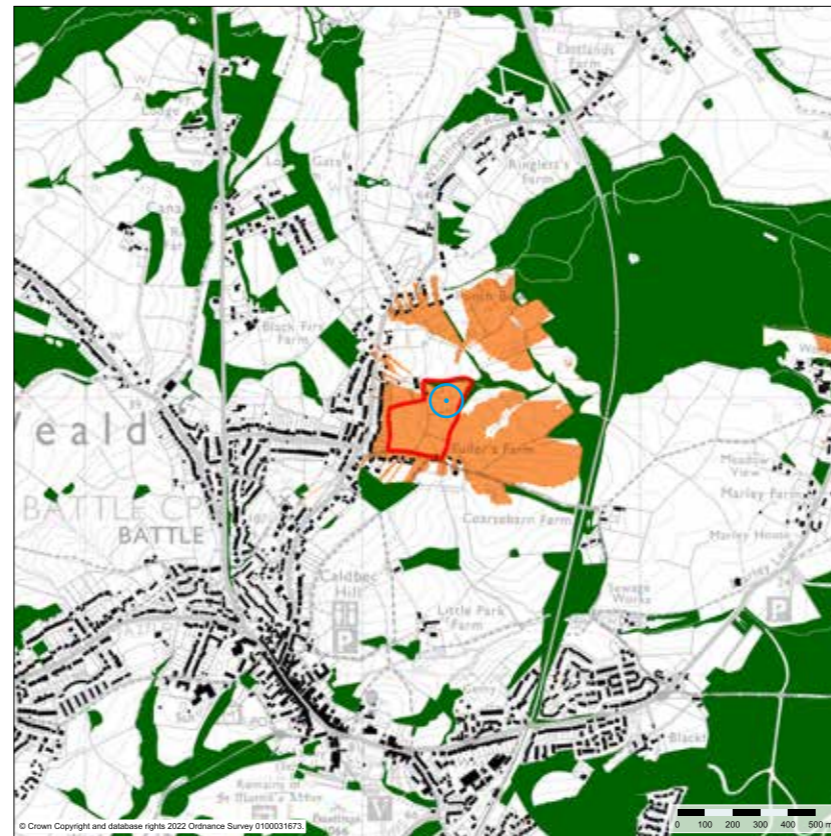


Fig. 27: Transmitter 8 Zone of Theoretical View

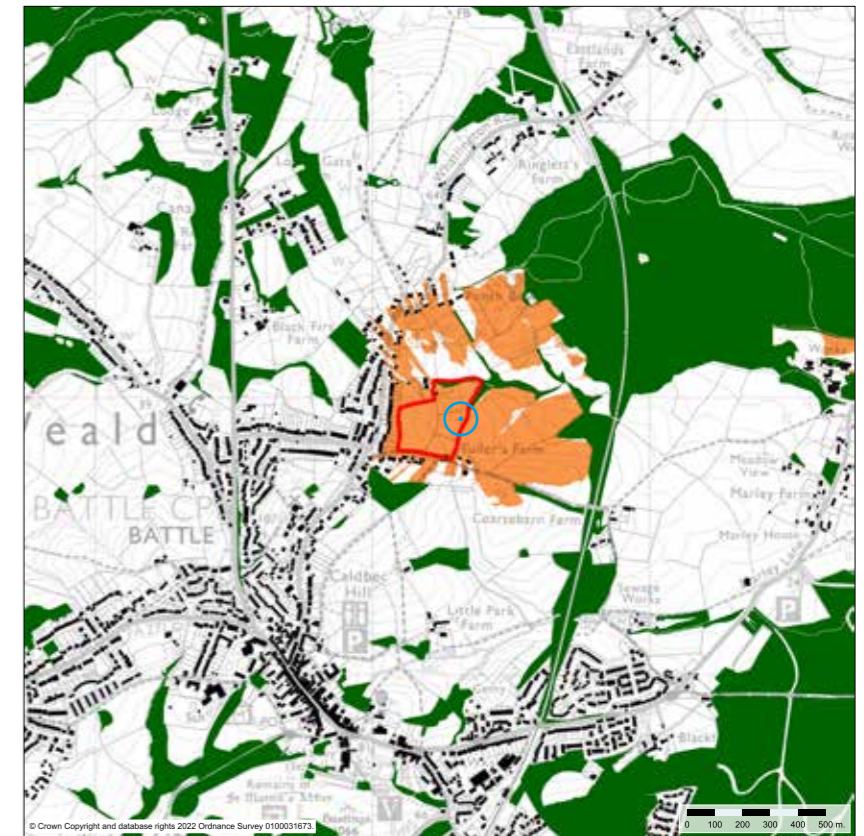


Fig. 28: Transmitter 9 Zone of Theoretical View

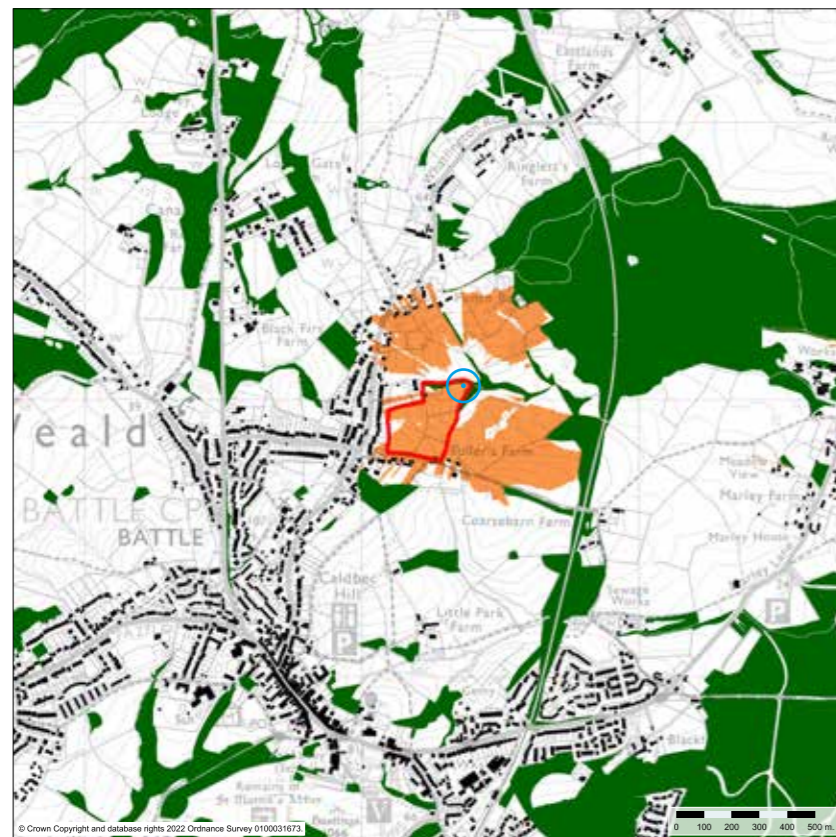


Fig. 29: Transmitter 10 Zone of Theoretical View

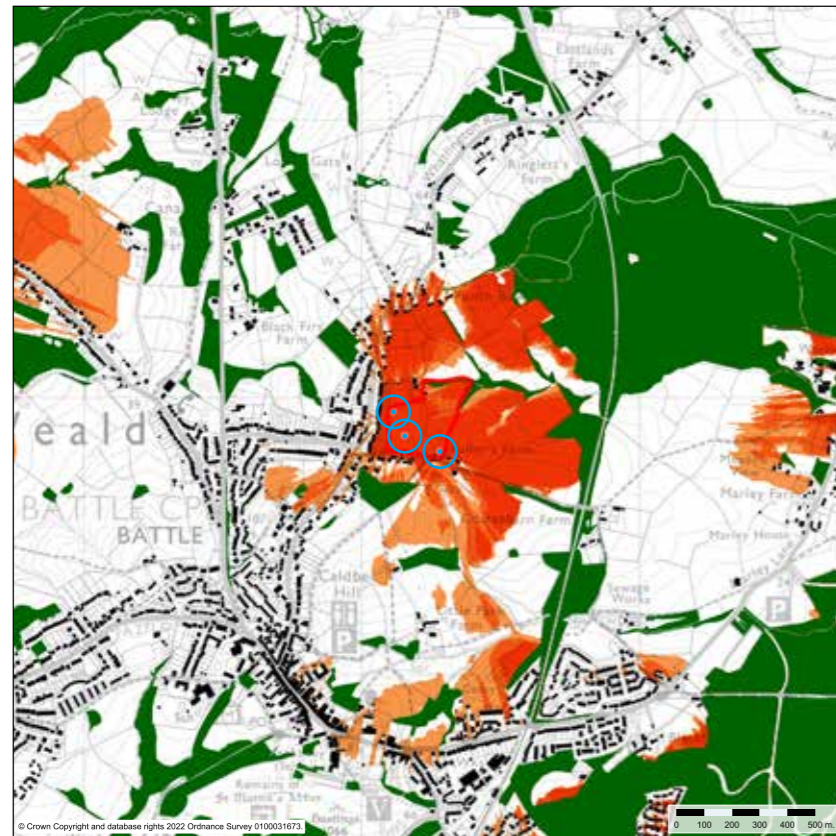


Fig. 30: Zone of Theoretical Visibility (Transmitters 1,2 and 3)

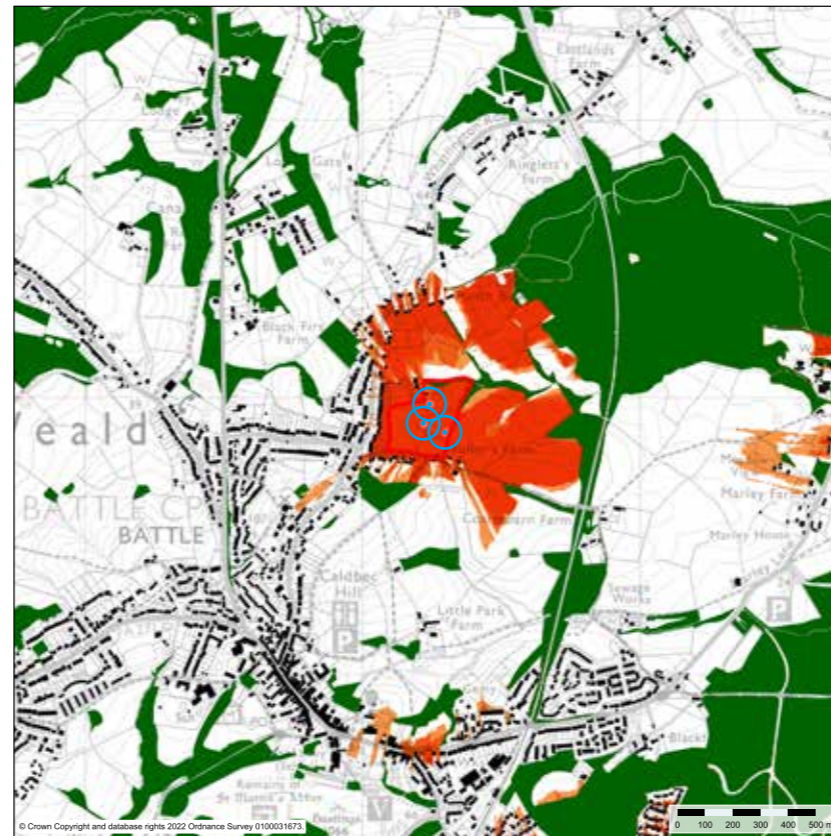


Fig. 31: Zone of Theoretical Visibility (Transmitters 4,5 and 6)

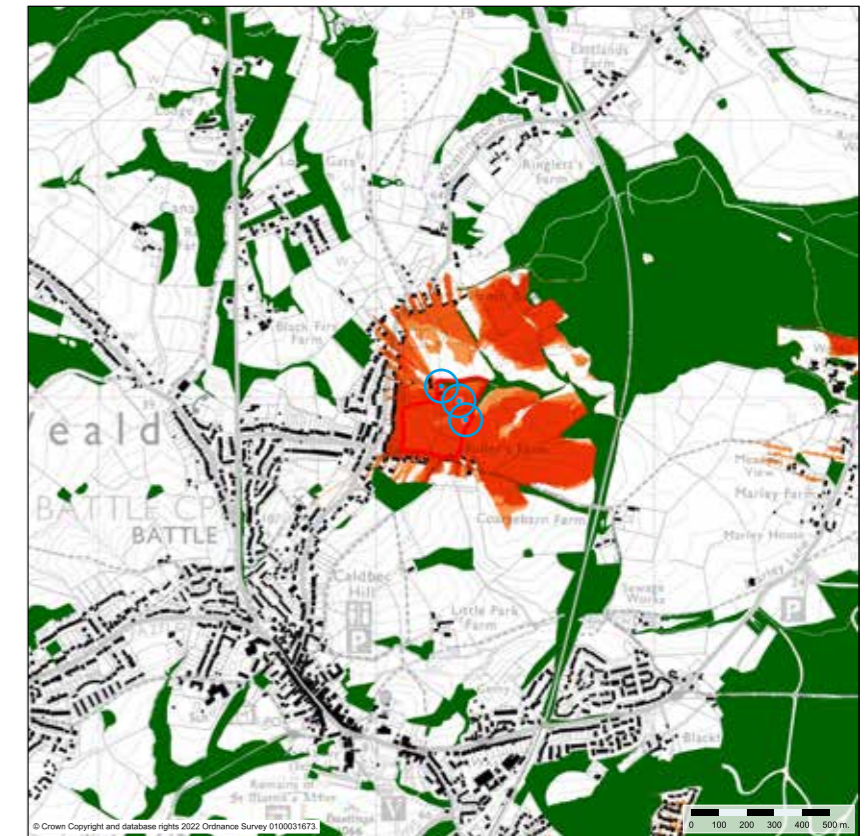


Fig. 32: Zone of Theoretical Visibility (Transmitters 7,8 and 9)

5.17 Figures 30 to 32 show a series of combined ZTV's for locations in the south western central and north eastern portions of the site.

5.18 Again this show that it is the south western parts of the site that have the greatest potential for new development to be visible from within the surrounding landscape This are however highly contained and limited in nature to the north and east with extended views potentially occurring to the south and north west.

5.19 Figures 31 and 32 demonstrate that as you move north and east across the site and down the slope that the effect of the reduced elevation significantly reduces the potential visual envelope to a very small, localised and contained area and largely from an area devoid of public accessible views.



6. FIELD OBSERVATIONS / SITE PHOTOS

- 6.1 Photographs ? to ? below show examples of various views towards and out from the site.
- 6.2 These photographs were taken on the 6th September 2023 under sunny, bright and dry weather conditions and are considered to represent optimal viewing conditions.



Photo 1: Entrance to Uckham Lane from Whatlington Road



Photo 2: View East along Uckham Lane



Photo 3: View East along Uckham Lane



Photo 4: View West along Uckham Lane



Photo 5: View of South Eastern site entrance



Photo 6: View of South Western site entrance



Photo 7: View West along Uckham Lane (Fullers Farm)



Photo 8: View West along Uckham Lane



Photo 9: View North from Public Footpath (Battle 25) within 100m



Photo 10: View North from Public Footpath (Battle 25) within 500m



Photo 11: North East from Whatlington Road



Photo 12: View East from Whatlington Road



Photo 13: View South East from Whatlington Road



Photo 14: View East from Virgins Lane



Photo 15: View South East from Netherfield Hill



Photo 16: Panoramic View North from South East corner of site



Photo 17: Panoramic View South from North East corner of site



Photo 18: Panoramic View East from North West corner of site



Photo 19: Panoramic View North East from South West corner of site

7. PUBLISHED LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENTS

7.1 The site, the settlement of Battle and the surrounding areas are covered by the following published landscape character areas assessments at the National to Local scales

- National Landscape Character Area Profiles - Natural England
- East Sussex Landscape Character Assessment (2016)
- Battle Civil Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan (2019) Character Appraisal

NATIONAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA PROFILES - NATURAL ENGLAND

Description: NCA Profile:122 High Weald (NE508)

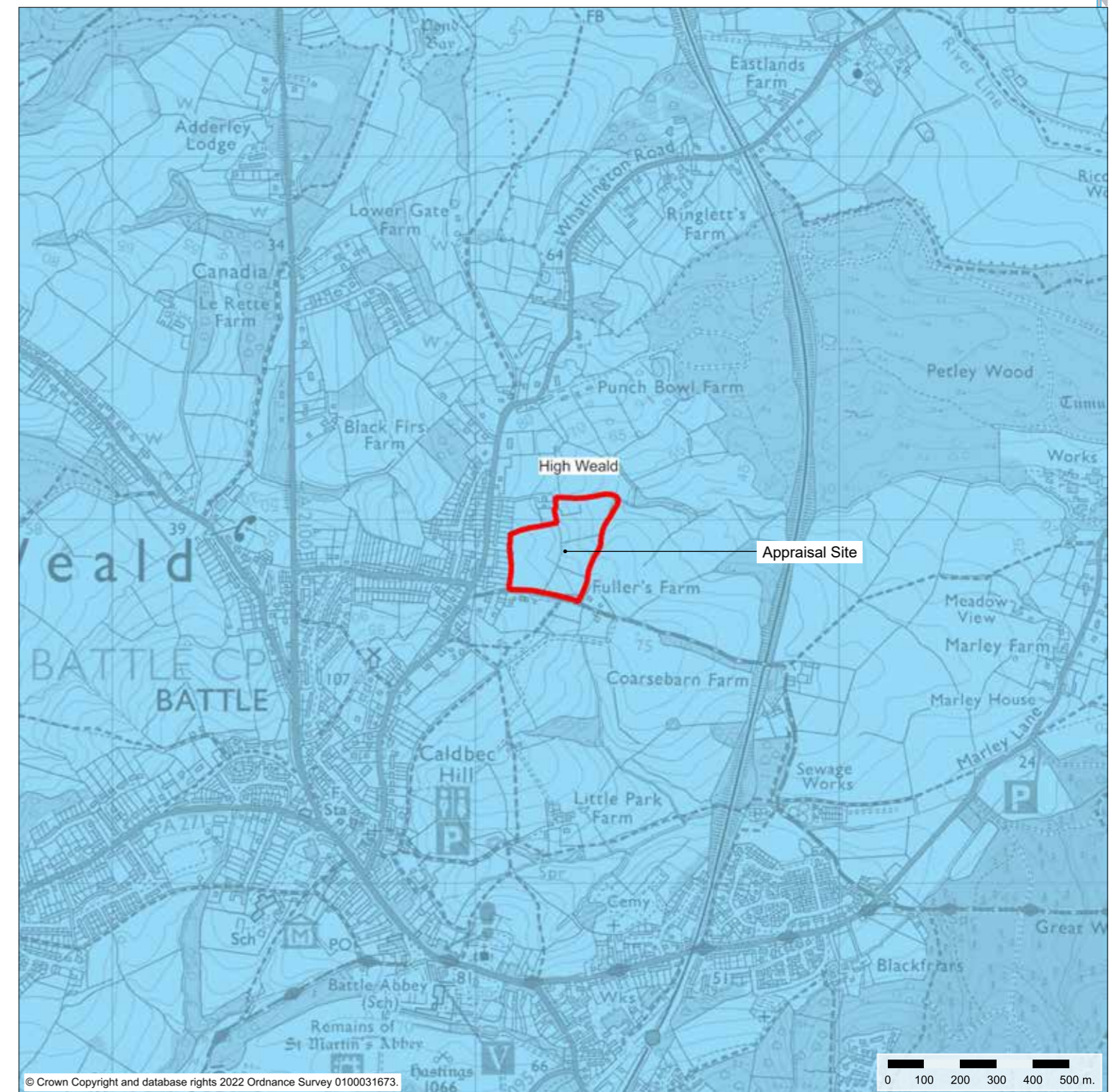
7.74 The following text is an extract from the NCA Profile 122: High Weald published by natural England.

'The High Weald National Character Area (NCA) encompasses the ridged and faulted sandstone core of the Kent and Sussex Weald. It is an area of ancient countryside and one of the best surviving medieval landscapes in northern Europe. The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) covers 78 per cent of the NCA. The High Weald consists of a mixture of fields, small woodlands and farmsteads connected by historic route ways, tracks and paths. Wild flower meadows are now rare but prominent medieval patterns of small pasture fields enclosed by thick hedgerows and shaws (narrow woodlands) remain fundamental to the character of the landscape.'

7.75 The key characteristics of this area are identified as comprising

- A faulted landform of clays, sand and soft sandstones with outcrops of fissured sandrock and ridges running east-west, deeply incised and intersected with numerous gill streams forming the headwaters of a number of the major rivers – the Rother, Brede, Ouse and Medway – which flow in broad valleys.
- High density of extraction pits, quarries and ponds, in part a consequence of diverse geology and highly variable soils over short distances.
- A dispersed settlement pattern of hamlets and scattered farmsteads and medieval ridge top villages founded on trade and non-agricultural rural industries, with a dominance of timber-framed buildings with steep roofs often hipped or half-hipped, and an extremely high survival rate of farm buildings dating from the 17th century or earlier.
- Ancient route ways in the form of ridge top roads and a dense system of radiating drove ways, often narrow, deeply sunken and edged with trees and wild flower-rich verges and boundary banks. Church towers and spires on the ridges are an important local landmark. There is a dense network of small, narrow and winding lanes, often sunken and enclosed by high hedgerows or woodland strips. The area includes several large towns such as Tunbridge Wells, Crowborough, Battle and Heathfield and is closely bordered by others such as Crawley, East Grinstead, Hastings and Horsham.
- An intimate, hidden and small-scale landscape with glimpses of far-reaching views, giving a sense of remoteness and tranquillity yet concealing the highest density of timber-framed buildings anywhere in Europe amidst lanes and paths.
- Strong feeling of remoteness due to very rural, wooded character. A great extent of interconnected ancient woods, steep-sided gill woodlands, wooded heaths and shaws in generally small holdings with extensive archaeology and evidence of long-term management.
- Extensive broadleaved woodland cover with a very high proportion of ancient woodland with high forest, small woods and shaws, plus steep valleys with gill woodland.
- Small and medium-sized irregularly shaped fields enclosed by a network of hedgerows and wooded shaws, predominantly of medieval origin and managed historically as a mosaic of small agricultural holdings typically used for livestock grazing.

Fig. 33: Ordnance survey map indicating extent of surrounding National Character Areas.



Appraisal Site
Boundary

**6469-LLB-RP-L-0001 | LANDSCAPE FEASIBILITY STUDY
LAND EAST OF BATTLE, ROTHER, EAST SUSSEX, TN33 0LP**

S2 - INFORMATION

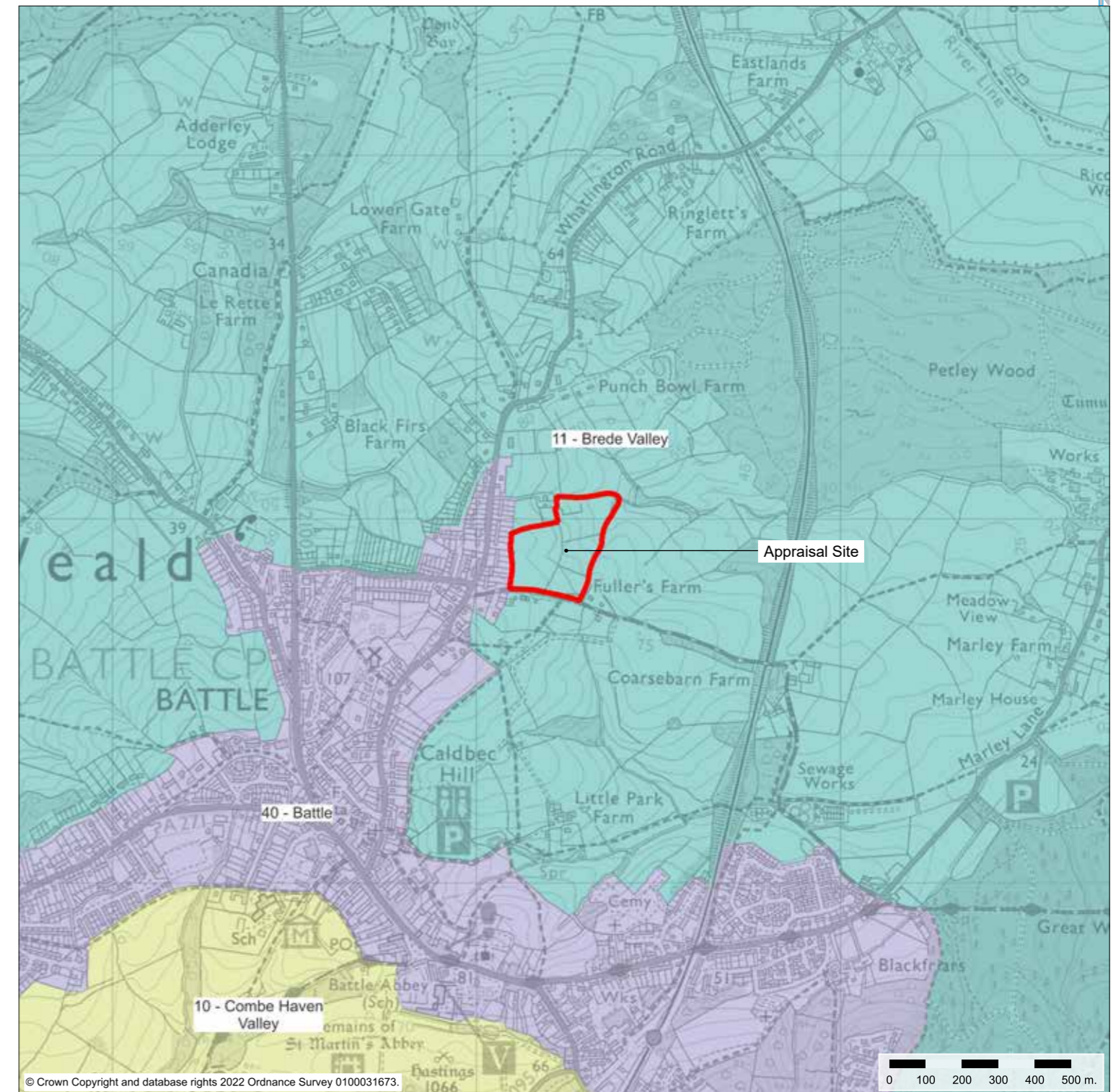
- A predominantly grassland agricultural landscape grazed mainly with sheep and some cattle.
- There is a strong influence of the Wealden iron industry which started in Roman times, until coke fuel replaced wood and charcoal. There are features such as a notably high number of small hammer ponds surviving today.
- Ashdown Forest, in contrast to the more intimate green woods and pastures elsewhere, is a high, rolling and open heathland lying on the sandstone ridges to the west of the area.
- An essentially medieval landscape reflected in the patterns of settlement, fields and woodland.
- High-quality vernacular architecture with distinct local variation using local materials. Horsham Slate is used on mainly timber structures and timber-framed barns are a particularly notable Wealden characteristic feature of the High Weald.

EAST SUSSEX LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT (2016)

Description: Brede Valley LCA

- 7.76 The site sits fully within the Brede Valley LCA. The key characteristics of this LCA comprise
- The broad valley of the River Brede with a flat valley floor enclosed by relatively steep slopes.
 - A sense of tranquillity away from the main settlements and roads.
 - Wide vistas from the enclosing ridges across the river valley floodplain.
 - Few detracting elements.
 - Well wooded sides slopes with scattered farmsteads and orchards.
 - River levels and marshes criss-crossed by reed fringed ditches or 'sewers'.
 - Extensive areas of Semi-Natural Ancient deciduous woodland around the valley head to the west of the area.
 - Scattered areas of Semi natural ancient woodland on the valley slopes, many of which are ghyll woodlands, a key characteristic of the High Weald.
 - To the south west of the main valley a belt of undulating countryside extends to the Battle to Hastings ridge.
 - Lines of Italian poplars planted as wind breaks are an introduced and characteristic feature.
 - Indigenous characteristic tree species are Oak and ash with sweet chestnut on drier slopes. Beech and pine also feature locally and other exotic specimens are found in gardens and villages.
 - Villages and their churches perched on the slopes overlooking the valley, notably Brede, Udimore and Icklesham.
 - Oast houses are characteristic and scattered on the slopes of the valley, many now converted into houses.
 - Powdermill Reservoir to the north of the valley is largely concealed by woodland.
 - Significant historic moated manor houses at Snailham and Court Lodge at Udimore, Crowham in Westfield and Brede Place in Brede.
 - The historic designed landscape and important archaeological site of Beauport Park lies to the south of the area.
 - Historic parkland at Brede Place and Pestalozzi children's centre in Sedlescombe.
 - Swans, herons and other wetland birds are very much features in the landscape.
 - Caravan and chalet developments which reflect the attractiveness of the area for holiday makers.
 - Flood defence works and engineering structures which detract from the naturalness of the river valley.
 - Urban fringe intrusions around the edges of Battle and Hastings including pylons, industrial units, housing and horticultural developments.
 - Much of the open valley is free of roads and traffic, but four A roads cross the valley A2100, A21, A28 and the A259.

Fig. 34: Ordnance survey map indicating extent of surrounding Regional Landscape Character Areas.



Appraisal Site
 Boundary

**6469-LLB-RP-L-0001 | LANDSCAPE FEASIBILITY STUDY
LAND EAST OF BATTLE, ROTHER, EAST SUSSEX, TN33 0LP**

S2 - INFORMATION

- These are linked by the B roads which traverse the enclosing ridges and link the villages.
- Winding and very narrow sunken country lanes with steep gradients.
- The south coast railway cuts across the south east part of the valley.

7.77 The Condition of this LCA is describes as follows

'This is a largely unspoilt and tranquil rural landscape with few intrusive features. The landscape is in generally good condition and well managed as farmland with a strong historic structure. Orchards have declined and many disappeared so that associated Oast houses have been converted to residential uses. Agricultural change has led to some gentrification of the rural landscape and villages. As with most of the High Weald landscape the historic field patterns of small fields and significant hedgerows remain intact.'

Description: Battle LCA

7.78 The site adjoins onto the Battle LCA on the sites western boundary. The key characteristics of this LCA comprise

- This ridge-top town has a skyline of historic buildings, dominated by the Abbey and the church.
- The medieval and Georgian High Street has a small scale, well massed buildings with good continuity of facades.
- There are picturesque frontages of red tile, timber-frame, render, white weatherboard and the local sandstone.
- The character of the town is enhanced by the predominance of small and traditional shops.
- The original stone from the substantially destroyed great religious buildings in Battle has been widely recycled in later historic periods, which gives the town great cohesion
- The massive Battle Abbey Gatehouse sits at the eastern end of the High Street above its triangular court yard, giving a wonderful sense of enclosure and character.
- The old town has an enclosed inward-looking character, with few views out.
- Views over the High Weald countryside from outer parts of town

**BATTLE CIVIL PARISH NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN
(2019) CHARACTER APPRAISAL**

*Description: Battle Civil Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan
(2019) Character Appraisal*

- 7.79 This character appraisal does not identify or map individual character areas and focus primarily on the town of Battle and the village of Netherfield and generally to those areas which fall inside the defined settlement extent of these settlements.
- 7.80 As such this Appraisal does not cover specifically the proposed site which is located outside of the settlement extent of Battle.
- 7.81 The following extracts however are considered to help provide an understanding into the relationship between the settlement and its surroundings.

'The Town Centre of Battle is dominated by the Abbey and the various listed properties, which denote its architectural heritage going back over many centuries. It sits on a ridge surrounded by ancient and semi-natural woodland, together with a number of large estates comprising arable and pasture land. To the north are the Rother, Brede and Tillingham woods and to the east the Great Wood dominates the Parish. It has been a designated conservation area since 1970.

Battle town is also served by rail allowing access not only to London and beyond but coastwise in both a west and east direction.

On the southern extremity of the Parish the small village of Telham is situated at the top of the hill on the A2100. There are few buildings of importance due to its heritage as a farming area. Its semi-isolation characteristics have generally resulted in a healthier resident community which is able to develop on a grander scale than is generally the case in the rest of the Parish.

On the north-western boundary of the Parish sits the village of Netherfield. Whilst there has been a small community within its environs since before Domesday Book its expansion in relatively modern times has been in concert with the growth of mining operations in the nearby village of Mountfield to its north. Minerals have been mined in the area since 1876 and tunneling underlies parts of the village; the Darvel Down estate was built in its present form in the 1950s. However, many historic houses still exist within the Netherfield conurbation which stretches from the bottom of Netherfield Hill up to Darwell Hole situated on the B2096 Battle to Heathfield Road.'

'The topography of the landscape surrounding Battle is important in creating its setting, with the open valley to the northeast and southwest of the town retained, heightening awareness of the town standing on the higher ridge, with no foreground development to detract.

However, the compactness of development within Battle has resulted in a substantially introverted town centre, with much of the built fabric hidden from many long views across farmland and trees, towards the town. This rural setting, with a lack of encroachment on surrounding countryside is a key characteristic of the town, as is the joy of the 'reveal' of finding a town hidden on approach.

Significant views into the town are indicated in Annex 3 to this Appraisal, 'Character Map of Battle Conservation Area' and include that from Marley Lane, looking west, and from the Mount Street car park, looking south.

The primary entrance to the town centre from the north starts with the roundabout junction of the A2100, North Trade Road and Market Road. From here, High Street tightens to the close-knit urban grain which continues for its entire length, and descends slowly southwards, drawing the eye gradually down towards the Abbey Gatehouse

The Mount Street approach to the town centre from the north starts with a steep descent between high vegetation on the western side, and twentieth century development on the eastern side recessed by wide, open gardens. This provides a satisfying transition from the rural character of the outskirts of the town at Caldbec Hill, to the more intensely developed streetscene as High Street is neared.'

8. OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

8.1 Based upon the above analysis this report has identified the following as being the key and most significant aspects representing opportunities and constraints to potential residential development on the proposed site.

CONSTRAINTS

- The site is located within the High Weald AONB.
- Site is located outside of the defined settlement envelope.
- The White House located in the south eastern corner of the site is recognised as a Locally Important Historic Building.
- The site experiences significant levels changes across the site in excess of 30m.
- Evidence that parts of the site have permanently / seasonal damp / waterlogged conditions.
- Evidence of seasonal surface water drainage features cross the site.
- The eastern part of the site is overlooked and clearly visible from adjoining private residential properties and their private rear garden spaces.
- Overhead Power cable cross the souther part of the site.
- Uckham Lane is a narrow single lane road.
- Site has significant areas of existing vegetation cover and habitats including mature trees, mature field boundary hedgerows and area of natural and semi natural grassland area that are likely to be of ecological value.
- Potential to provide up to 16 dwellings including 5 Affordable units help to the future housing need for Battle in line with local planning policy.
- The typical visibility characteristics of the study area is one of a highly visually fragmented and contained landscape where medium to long range views across the surrounding landscape are uncommon. This results in the site having a very small visual envelope meaning that changes in the appear of the site would be experienced from only a very small localised area and predominantly from publicly inaccessible locations.
- The site has good connections to the existing public right of way network providing direct connections to the rest of the Battle and the town centre.
- Development of the site would provide an opportunity to provide an enhanced public footpath route along part of Uckham Lane.
- The site is located in close proximity to the existing Bus Stop on Whatlington Road provide good public transport connectivity.
- There is direct access onto the site view Uckham Lane.
- The site contains existing vegetation and habitats that would offer good potential for the basis for on-site ecology and Bio-Diversity Enhancements.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Local planning policy recognises that sites outside of the existing Battle Settlement boundary are need to meet future housing need, so development on this site would be in line with Planning Policy
- Development on this site would be in keeping with the historic settlement growth pattern of Battle.
- The site is not covered by any site specific designations and is sufficient distant from any designated areas or features that development of the site is very unlikely to result in any impacts upon culturally, historic or environmentally important features of the landscape.

9. SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

SCOPE OF ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 The purpose of this report has been to undertake an impartial baseline feasibility assessment of the site to consider its suitability for consideration for future residential development.
- 9.2 The report has undertaken a desktop study of the site and its surroundings supported by field work in order to develop a detailed understanding of the landscape and visual characteristics of the site and study area.
- 9.3 A detailed digital visual analysis of the site has also been undertaken to develop an understanding of the overall general visibility of the site within the landscape as well as a the general nature of visibility within the study area as a whole to help understand how visible any future development on the site might be.
- 9.4 This information has then been used to identify the key landscape Opportunities and Constraints applicable to the site and these have been used to produce an Opportunities and Constraints Plan which in turn has been used to identify potential locations within the site that could be considered suitable for development.

PLANNING

- 9.5 This assessment has identified that the key planning policy issues that are considered to directly influence the site suitability for residential development comprise,
- *The site being located within the High Weald AONB*
 - *The site being located outside of the defined settlement extent of Battle.*
- 9.6 The AONB Designation is however not intended to prevent all and any development occurring within the AONB, rather its purpose is to ensure that any development within the AONB is necessary and appropriate and designed in such a way as to ensure that it 'conserves and enhances' the natural beauty of the AONB and does not adversely impact the quality and Character of the AONB
- 9.7 Local planning Policy both within the Rother Local Plan and Battle Civil Parish Neighbourhood Plan both recognise that there is a requirement to identify suitable sites outside of the current settlement extents in order to meet current Housing Need that can not be met by allocated sites within the settlement extents.

- 9.8 Overall it is concluded that a high quality, appropriately design residential scheme could be accommodated on the proposed site and that subject to conforming to the relevant planning policies would be in line with the overall Local planning policy objectives.

Housing Provision

- 9.9 This assessment has identified circa 1.4ha of the overall site has being potentially viable for development.
- 9.10 Analysis of the existing density of different parts of Battle has shown that the settlement typically has an average density of between 8 to 14 Unit per hectare, although the most recent development at Black friars having significantly higher density of 30 p/h.
- 9.11 Taking a suggested density of 11 - 12 units per hectare, this means that the site could provide up to 16 dwellings of which 5-6 would be affordable.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Landscape Designations

- 9.12 This assessment has identified that the site and its immediate surroundings are, with the exception of the High Weald AONB designation, devoid of any landscape designations that would either represent a direct constraint to, or that would need to be considered for, any potential development of the site.
- 9.13 The key significant historic and cultural feature of Battle and the surrounding landscape including Battle Abbey, Battle of Hastings Register Battlefield, Conservation Area and Nationally recognised listed buildings are all located at sufficient distance from the site boundary and visually separated from it to the extent that the site is not considered to be either physically or visually part of the setting of these historic assets.

High Weald AONB

- 9.14 Although the site is located within the AONB, the Settlement of Battle as a whole is also located within the AONB and can be considered to be a significant component of the unique character of the AONB, due to its historic and cultural importance. Therefore settlement and residential development in general is also considered to be a contributing feature of the AONB.

- 9.15 In this context the introduction of new development within the AONB can not automatically be considered to be inappropriate or detrimental to the quality or character of the AONB, rather it is dependant upon its appropriateness in terms of location, scale and appearance.

- 9.16 The assessment concludes that the site is appropriate in terms of location, being located adjacent to an existing settlement and representing a location that is in keeping with the both historic patterns of settlement distribution within the AONB as a whole, and the settlement growth pattern of Battle.

- 9.17 It is concluded that the overall size of the site and the proportion identified as suitable for development is also appropriate, proportionate and in keeping with the existing settlement of Battle.

- 9.18 Overall therefore it is considered that a high quality scheme of an appropriate design in terms of layout, density and appearance (architectural style and materials) would not result in a material reduction in the quality, character or existing natural beauty of the AONB.

Historic Assets

- 9.19 The White House located in the south east corner of the site is identified within the Battle Civil Parish Neighbourhood Plan as a locally important historic asset but this is a undesignated classification that whilst important should be given minimum weight.
- 9.20 It is likely however that an adequate 'buffer' could be incorporated into any scheme in order to protect the setting and character of this building.

Landscape Features

- 9.21 This assessment has identified that the site has a number of physical features and characteristics that would be considered constraints to development and that would need to be taken into account in the development of any site specific proposal. These being
- *Topography*
 - *Ground Conditions*
 - *Existing Vegetation / Habitats*
 - *Access*
 - *Services*

Topography

- 9.22 The site is undulating in nature with a significant level change of over 30m from south west to north east.
- 9.23 Gradients within the central part of the site are significant and are likely to make development in this part of the site challenging.
- 9.24 The low lying north eastern part of the site is likely to be a challenging gin terms of providing access and service connections.
- 9.25 The southern / eastern, upper parts of the site are typically flatter and likely to be more suitable for development.

Ground Conditions

- 9.26 Field observations showed signs that there are parts of the site predominantly along the central east to west aligned field boundary and the north east portion of the site that experience all year round high water content and seasonal water logging with evidence of several seasonal surface water drainage channels.
- 9.27 This is likely to make development within these part of the site challenging.

Existing Vegetation / Ecology

- 9.28 The site generally contains significant areas of existing and mature vegetation cover and habitats that are considered to be both characteristic of the landscape and of likely ecological value that would merit either their protection and/or enhancement/replacement.
- 9.29 In particular mature field boundary hedgerows and trees, areas of rough grassland and scrub vegetation around the field margins.

Access

- 9.30 Although there is good direct access into the site from Uckham Lane, this is a narrow single lane road that may place restrictions on the level of acceptable traffic volume that the lane could support.

Services

- 9.31 There is an existing overhead power cable across the southern part of the site that will have an easement that would need to be taken into account.

VISUAL AMENITY

- 9.32 This assessment has concluded that overall the landscape in this area is generally of a highly visually contained nature.

9.33 The combination of the underlying landform and the extensive vegetation cover present throughout this part of the High Weald AONB, in particular significant and frequent block of both ancient and non-ancient woodland, field boundary and rural lane hedgerows, means that at a human scale from most locations an individual experiences only very local, short range and highly contained views of their immediate surroundings.

9.34 The detailed visual analysis undertaken by this report has demonstrated that in particular the site has a very small and limited visual envelope to the north, west and south.

9.35 To the north views of the site do not really extend beyond the immediate site boundary. Extensive woodland cover immediate north of the site effectively screens the site from this direction. This area is also devoid of public rights of way.

9.36 Similarly to the west views of the site do not extend beyond the rear gardens and east facing windows of the residential properties immediately adjoining the sites western boundary. The site not being visible from Whatlington Road or location west of the road.

9.37 South of the site the site is not highly visible even from Uckham Lane due to the height and density of the southern field boundary hedgerow. Glimpsed views of the site are experienced from Uckham lane through the existing field gates and a short 100m section of public footpath Battle 25 immediately South of Uckham Lane where it passes through the grounds of Uckham Lane Nursery before it passes through a very mature hedgerow that effect prevent views further south.

9.38 There are extended long range views from the site to the east and north east of the site, due to the sites elevated location on the northern slope of Caldbec Hill. However the landscape to the east and north east comprises of predominantly privately owned farmland and Ancient / Non Ancient woodland with very few to no public rights of way. Again due to the combination of the underlying landform and vegetation cover characteristics of the landscape from location in this area looking back towards the site the site is likely to be highly screened and largely obscured by intervening vegetation.

9.39 In addition it is likely that from any location where the site was visible, that the existing residential development west of the site associated with the existing settlement of Battle would also most likely be visible, therefore new development within these views would not automatically be uncharacteristic of the existing views..

CONCLUSION

- 9.40 Overall this assessment concludes that the site is considered to be suitable for residential development subject to the development of a high quality and appropriate scheme in terms of layout, density and appearance (architectural style and materials).
- 9.41 The site has very few constraints in terms of landscape character and visual amenity considerations and as a result is considered to have a high intrinsic capacity to accommodate development without resulting in significant harm to landscape character or visual amenity occurring. This is due to the following key factors.
- *Local Planning Policy recognises the need for additional housing site outside of the existing settlement envelopment to be identified to meet current housing need for Battle*
 - *The site is located adjacent to the existing settlement envelope in a location that is considered in keeping with the historic settlement worth patterns of Battle.*
 - *With the exception of the AONB designation which applies to the whole study area the site is not covered by any important landscape designations designed to protect important landscape features or components.*
 - *The site is located at distance from the key historic and culturally important areas and features of the Battle.*
 - *The site has a very small and limited visual envelope with views of the site being restricted to a very small number of locations immediately adjoining the site boundary and from very few publicly accessible locations.*